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SENTIMENTS

ON

RESIGNATION.

BY ROSEWELL MESSINGER,
PASTOR OF THE FIRST CHURCH IN YORK, MAINE.

"*Shall not the Judge of all the Earth do right.*"

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1830.

To the Patrons of the Work.

FOR more than two years the Author has been deprived of sight, and left to the awful and sublime perception of total darkness. Through the vicissitudes of excrutiating pain, and tiresome debility, and through repeated scenes of alarming sickness in his family, he has personally supplied the pulpit, and produced by the aid of an amanuensis the following work. The greatest part of it has been studied when the springs of life were so far exhausted, that he had reason to apprehend a speedy removal to that world, where the hope of the hypocrite shall perish; but the resigned soul shall enjoy with rapture the pure effulgence of eternal day.

The generous patronage, which the work has received, is gratefully acknowledged. Should its merit be insufficient to remunerate the liberality of the patrons, they will resort to the consciousness of being promptly disposed to encourage industry, and to befriend the honest exertions of a fellow mortal. The author is forbidden to aspire after scientific distinction. While Homer, Milton, and Saunderson, inherit the heights of fame, his greatest desire is to be found in a humble attitude at the feet of Jesus. Should he ever be assured that his

labors have been instrumental in dissolving the dream of security, in diminishing the empire of despondency, and in planting the smile of resignation amidst the tears of the orphan and bereaved pilgrim, he will obtain a rich reward.

——————————"Thus with the year
"Seasons return; but not to me returns
"Day, or the sweet approach of ev'n or morn,
"Or sight of vernal bloom, or summer's rose,
"Or flocks, or herds, or human face divine;
"But clouds instead, and ever during dark
"Surrounds me, from the cheerful ways of men
"Cut off, and for the book of knowledge fair
"Presented with an universal blank
"Of nature's works, to me expung'd and ras'd,
"And wisdom at one entrance quite shut out,
"So much the rather thou, celestial light,
"Shine inward, and the mind thro' all her powers
"Irradiate, there plant eyes, all mist from thence
"Purge and disperse, that I may see and tell
"Of things invisible to mortal sight."

MILTON.

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SENTIMENTS

ON

RESIGNATION.

CHAPTER I.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF RESIGNATION.

CLOTHED with an assemblage of alluring attributes, happiness presents herself within the discernment of every mortal eye. Her influence in different degrees, is universally felt. By some, nothing more than a transient moment seems to prevent her embraces; while others view her at a dark and bewildering distance. She excites a trembling hope in the bosom of the wretched, a more glowing expectation in the sons and daughters of prosperity, a consoling assurance in great and generous souls, and is not entirely excluded from the dreams of the desperate. From the sentiments of misery, the vanity of the past,

and the incompetency of the present, we incessantly call upon futurity to lead us into that scene of bliss, which an unyielding and tireless fancy continues to portray. Curiosity has often been baffled in searching for the motives, by which mankind, in such variety of courses, are continually actuated. The mystery, however, dissolves, when it is considered, that they are all striving to evade the empire of misery and to enjoy the smiles of happiness. The man, who tills the ground, aims at this object. The strokes, under which the oak and the thorn are subdued, delusively measure his advances to happiness. The very sweat of his brow and the pangs of fatigue are made to mark the gradual diminution of those hours, which are to elapse previous to the crowning of his wishes. The mariner, through an adventurous and toilsome series of enterprize, searches for that repose, which is the special property of happiness.—His heart is daily replenished with the fervors of hope, a hope that looks forward to the most enamouring felicity. Hence it is no longer marvellous, that he tears himself from the scenes of domestic life, the bosom of his fair companion, and the endearments of his blooming offspring; and perhaps more from the solicitude of natural affection, than from the influence of faith, commits them to the tender protection of the Divinity. To-day, he sets a restless foot on the verdent shores of the east; to-morrow, he explores the trackless regions

of the west—but enjoyment both here and there eludes his embraces. The philosopher espouses a different style of energy and employment, but is actuated by the influence that arises from the prospect of happiness and renown. With indefatigable steps, he ascends the acclivities of science, and hopes for the time, when the tremulous glimmerings of the nightly lamp will immerge in the effulgence of literary glory.

Alas, to what effect are all the toils of man, without a spirit of reconciliation to the divine will! Restlessness and dissatisfaction are inseparable from our existence, till resignation obtain a residence in our hearts. The labors of the field, the hazardous travels of the mariner, and the powerful researches of the philosopher, are justly eulogized by genius and wisdom; but are consecrated to worth and excellence by a submissive reliance on God, and the smiles of his reconciled countenance. Destitute of a pious resignation, they would amount to no greater advantage, than to dissipate the vapours of indolence, beguile the hours of life, or extend the boundaries of knowledge, and thus multiply the sources of infelicity. Anxiety and discontent, with a thousand corroding perplexities, find an early access to our bosoms; nor is it in the province of the most officious imagination and industrious ingenuity to allay, at all times, their poignancy, or to consign them to forgetfulness. An acquaintance in the Divine Sove-

reignty, an enlightened view of the character of God, raise the soul above the horrors of calamity. An innocent pliability is fruitful of advantage in the concerns of society. In this way without the least sacrifice of integrity, many precious moments are rescued from tumult and violence, and the rigour and asperity of many natural and civil evils are evaded. An open and violent resistance against the power of fashion, and the current manners of the day, expose us to far greater hazard, than a retreat from their influence. The bold and daring cedar of the mountain is demolished by the same tempest, that is out-lived by the pliant willow of the garden.

Such are the effects of pliancy in the common concerns of life. Submission to the divine will relates to matters of infinite moment and reality, and is capable of affording the most signal advantages to those, who experience its sacred influence. In every condition, it affords a relief from our burdens and support to our souls. It constitutes a refuge, to which the soul repairs with composure, and views, with a reverential smile, that irresistible hand, which controls the thunder and directs the storm. Here, under the healing effusions of the spirit, the throbbing artery of wo is quieted, and the heart is alive with delightful sensations. Here, the love of existence mingles with the love of God, and gloriously triumphs over the cares and calamities of time.

The enjoyment of the present state depends,

for its purity and permanence, upon resignation. All the pleasures in the wide field of irreconciliation are sordid and worthless. The sources, whence they arise, are corrupt. Thus the streams are intermingled with many subtle and noxious ingredients, through their various and enchanting windings. They are tasted with unbounded avidity, but never fail to leave a poisonous and deadly sediment within us. The ever busy wheel of vicissitude brings objects into view, that excite attachment, then sweeps them away, and leaves the world to languish in bereavement. Acquisition and loss alternately reign from the lowest paths of poverty and wretchedness to the highest walks of earthly magnificence and greatness. The joys that arise from these precarious scenes are subject to the same *dereliction* with the objects that afford them. The moment, in which riches and affluence have made their flight from the arms of their boasting possessor, has been frequently darkened by some direful catastrophe. My joy is fled! wretchedness overwhelms me! cries the graceless coward, while he directs the *poniard* to his heart. Others, from a loss of lesser toys and the removal of those objects, which have held an enchantment upon them, have wandered hopeless exiles into the realms of wo.

To what dreadful miseries, are we continually exposed, without resignation? A thousand joys expire in their birth; others just be-

gin to be felt and are swept away by the hand of calamity; and if a few are destined to a longer continuance, they are stripped of their charms by their sameness, poisoned by disappointment, and languish into oblivion. Ah! how often do we outlive ourselves, breathe and act, while every delightful sensation of existence is banished from the bosom. Resignation procures us joys, that mock the ruins of change, that retain their excellence under all the bereavements and trials of the present state. The unresigned are not only liable to be deserted by their joys, but their hearts are incessantly exposed to a shower of arrows from every grievous visitation of Providence. These arrows are barbed by the stings of conscience and imbrued in the poison of remorse; they enter the heart, whence each endeavor to extract them gives additional poignancy, till every nerve of pain vibrates under their corroding influence. The wounds inflicted upon the children of submission, are painful for the instant, but are neither dangerous nor destructive. They are often converted into drains, through which are often conveyed from the heart, the seeds of moral distempers and carnal pollution. In the bosoms of the resigned there is a temple, the residence of the Holy Spirit, and of happiness. Repairing to this, they are free from the annoyance of spiritual enemies, and injuries from the wiles of satan; and they are unmolested by the powers of disaster and death.

From the day that man was exiled from the garden of God, public as well as private calamities have constituted much of the complexion of every age. War, that insatiable ravager, has travelled through the wide realms of mortal existence. The most sequestered retirement and peaceful seclusions have been darkened by its horrors and stained by its bloody footsteps. Revolutions, like the waves of a shoreless ocean, have rolled round the world, constantly bringing into view an infinite variety of evils. Changes, effected under the empire of human passions and events, produced by the influence of pride, luxury and vice, stand in dismal aspect before the trembling eye of meditation. Innocence itself often mourns for an asylum. By no evasions suggested from wisdom and art, can we hope to be rescued entirely from the experience of these general calamities. While man can feel the grief of man; while the tear of sensibility starts at the inspection of distress, wherever it is found in human form; while the filaments of attachment are woven from heart to heart, by the reciprocity of benevolent sentiments, and the dissolving of them, either by banishment or death, is distressful; while we are susceptible of melancholy from grievous dispensations; while all these are realities, the tidings of calamity will frequently knock at our doors, alarm our richest repose, leave us to distraction of thought, and open our bosoms to the invasion of terror.

Resignation is a defence against the disheartening and overwhelming influence of public calamities. It renders supportable a view of the ruins of human glory, by awakening the sentiments of immortality. It inspires a pleasing serenity, while we pass the early tomb of genius and piety, and wraps us in reverential silence, when we discover the impious villain in the tenure of a long life. It discerns a controling agency, which it dares neither to deny nor mock. Without submission, we groan under the rigour of present trials, which are always enhanced from the intrusion of tormenting apprehensions.—How much does it abate from the joys of an affectionate mother, when she looks on the attracting face of her child, with a heart alive to the fine fervours of natural affection, then turns to view that world of trouble and danger, through which it is doomed to pass! Love becomes anxious, and losing sight of heaven, repines at the destinies of Providence.

The daughter of resignation is inspired with more noble sentiments; she looks with tenderness on her offspring, and cheerfully conveys them to Christ, and to the guidance of that being who protects the slumber of the cradle, and the strength of age, and equally notices the death of the sparrow and the ruin of a kingdom. Submissive souls, always confiding in the rectitude of heaven, and being presented with enlarged views of the divine government, rise above the world

and feel the triumphs of grace, while philosophy and all its munitions are tumbling to nothing. The slavery, into which we are decoyed or forced by our passions, is dissolved under the influence of resignation. When we submissively feel our alliance with God, we are afraid to wander from his presence, into the bewildering mazes of carnal extravagance. While pride has an allowed abode in our hearts, the whole train of evil passions combine their officious agency, in procuring our ruin. Every generous sentiment is extinguished, and every manly energy of the soul is suppressed. The fumes of passion incessantly brood on the mind with mingled heat and darkness, and conceal the excellence of every object, that is worthy our aspiration.

A variety of remedies is prescribed to recover us from the control of unhallowed desire. We are instructed to follow the dictates of reason and moral virtue. We are sometimes exhorted to tear ourselves from the glare of those objects, which feed our passions, to move into the shades of retirement, and to bury our propensities in the ashes of mortification. We are sometimes directed to the rigid law of self-denial, and are urged to an ascendency over our passions, by all the rewards of future fame. Again we are told to tread for ever in the paths of harmless amusement. But the dormant state of our evil inclinations, their bare suppression, their concealment under the specious forms of virtue,

leave it to uncertainty, whether they are eradicated, and whether the soul has actually triumphed over their influence. Resignation restores us to a consciousness of what we are, and excites a prevailing inclination to become what we ought to be. It calms into quietude and silence, the most violent agitations of the soul, and gives a crystal clearness to those troubled waters, which under the influence of passion, are in awful commotion. It demolishes the pride of our hearts; and as the removal of a tyrant and his auxiliaries restores a world to liberty and enjoyment, so the banishment of pride, under the power of submission, opens the heart to the most delicious sensations and salutary exercises. Here the tinsel rhapsodies of imagination are dissolved. Lust and desire, with all their extravagances, are thrown into a dissolution, which their own excesses could not procure. That haughty spirit, which poured its satire against God and heaven, subsides, and leaves an entrance to that thoughtful reverence, which observes a Deity in the sparkling visage of the diamond and an unerring rectitude in all the footsteps of Providence. Those exalted sentiments of the Divinity, which resignation never fails to excite, wing the soul alike from the slavery of passion, the violence of lust, the allurements of pleasure, and the false glare of secular greatness.

Ye men of the world, whose bosoms have harbored passions, that philosophy has toiled

in vain to subdue; passions and lusts, that have scarcely been suspended by the loudest thundering of adversity; cast your eyes for once upon some fair daughter of resigned sorrow; behold her tears, they speak of her heart, of heaven, of God! their eloquence is free from sophistry and free from pride; and suppress, if you can, a desire to partake of the heavenly fruits of submission. Resignation is indispensably necessary to the acquisition of useful truth. The possession of divine truth, and a hearty attachment to its unalterable excellence, reinstamp us with the image of glory, and give us a participation in pleasures, that are sublime and lasting.—This is an object, which is worthy the researches of an immortal mind. It rewards exertion, not with meretricious ornaments, but with incorruptible honor. Here might the kings of the earth deposit their crowns, and the emblems of ideal grandeur and fashionable distinction; and become as great in goodness, and as good in greatness, as the humble cottager, who knows and loves his God. This is a species of truth that is a counterpoise to the most depressing infirmities of our nature, and pours its cheering illuminations through the darkest storms of adversity. It hallows every solitary hour of life. It interdicts the intoxicating cup of sensual pleasure before we bear it to our lips. It elevates us above the distraction, violence and tumult of the world. It plants its guardian vigils a-

round us on the bed of sickness, and brightens the perspectives of an eternal world, at the hour of death. But the children of irreconciliation are excluded from all these salutary and heart-sustaining benefits. A turbid spirit discolours the complexion of truth, and constantly labors to evade the force of those realities, which are not congenial with the views of a carnal mind, and the feelings of a distempered heart. Whereas a devout inspection of the works of nature, is delightful and satisfactory to the eye of submission.—Truth and light, under the active powers of investigation, beam on the soul from every object, and exhibit God, even in the apparent minuteness of his works. The moment we relinquish the cradle, we are presented with a view of nature's inimitable scenery.

Here the powers of thought are called into being; and curiosity, wonder and imagination, are awakened and become subsidiary to the pursuits of knowledge. The votary to submission advances in this instructive path, charmed by his progress and the delights of the way. He discovers an immense chain of correspondencies and reciprocal dependence, suspended from the finger of God, reaching to the dust, that cleaves to the foot of the traveller. Divine sentiments kindle in his bosom. Conscious insufficiency mysteriously serves to aid his ascension to the source of intelligence. Irreconciliation draws a veil between nature and the Divinity.

The fair fabric of creation becomes a back-ground scenery, inexplicably darkened before him, to whom wisdom, goodness and divine love are invisible. Thus he groans, sighs, and pours out his rancorous complaints. The ruins of the canker in his garden, the ravages of the worm in the field, excite the venom of his breast. He imperiously asperses the guardian of men and things, and with daring effrontery denies the rectitude of heaven.—Where is the warrior, who is ever alive to the charms of nature, while enveloped in the din and smoke of battle? Where is the man, that has ever been enamoured with the features of divine truth, while devoted to the darkened work of rebellion against God? A serious notice of Divine Providence is useful and instructive. Hereby we are often impressed, with the indispensability of duties already known, and led to the discovery of new and edifying truths. But should we gaze for ever, at the footsteps of Providence, a murmuring spirit would render totally impracticable our own edification. By endeavoring to measure the intentions of God by our own conceptions, we are deluded into darkness, where the beams of Divine complacency are never commissioned to enter. Thence we are heard to exclaim: why are we doomed to be tossed for ever on the tempestuous flood of calamity? Why are our brightest hopes rendered as empty as the vision of a dream and transient as the spark, that falls from the flint? Why are we expos-

ed to such disheartening vicissitudes, and such ardent conflicts? Why are we tortured with pains, torn from our enjoyments by sickness, and arrested in our course by the iron hand of disappointment? Alas! how often is this blasphemous language practically adopted; and the hideous complexion of this cynical temper discovered through the tinsel disguise it wears.

Delirium and madness are frequently the offspring of irreconciliation. They contumeliously reproach the inscrutable design of events, darken councils, close the avenues of knowledge and poison the spring of life. Do we experience the influence of resignation? We look with different eyes and different sensations upon Divine Providence. We do not leap with anger into the trackless realms of presumption; the horrors of insufficiency melt away into the precious sentiments of Divine rectitude. It gives us a pleasure, unknown to the multitude, that kingdoms, nations and our lives, are under the constant inspection of Omniscience, and the controul of a hand that rules with immaculate righteousness. We look, with reverence, upon the long and glorious annals of Divine government. Our faith brightens, and our alliance with heaven strengthens by the prospect. A consciousness of mortality, gives birth to the swelling feelings of immortality. Our ills, our pains and sorrows are lost in the view of eternal good. Have we rejoiced and mourned, hoped and

despaired, fallen and risen? As we have journeyed thus far in life; a righteous God has always been before us, either in a cloud or in a pillar of fire. A pang more, or a pang less, another ray of prosperity, another hour of adversity, or another span to the length of our way might have made us something different from what we now are. There our souls recoil as at the thoughts of oblivion; for the consciousness of what we are, is dear as life; it is the essence of being. The resigned mind gains knowledge from nature, and instruction from Divine Providence, it advances to glory, through every event, and triumphs beyond the reach of carnal commotion.

The lustre of revealed truth is, also, either wrapped in clouds before those, who are destitute of submission, or is beheld under all the distortions, that a distempered mind and corrupted heart can invent. Objections are palpably made against the counsels of the Almighty. That his noblest works should be condemned to wander in the mazes of depravity; that he should delay the mission of a Redeemer, and destine so many ages to roll away in darkness; that he should commit the tidings of salvation to a humble Nazarene; that he should make the portals of glory accessible to none, but meek and submissive spirits, are complaints which fall from the lips of unreclaimed apostates. They announce the blackness of depravity, a wilful

evasion of the truth, and evince the infusion of infernal wrath. On the contrary, with what mingled delight and wonder do the children of submission listen to the oracles of God. They are vivified by the effulgence of truth; they rejoice in the counsels of the Most High, and catch the joys of angels from admiring with them, the designs and methods of grace, in the redemption of the trembling sinner. Alive to hope and joy, they look on Jesus and love away the rising pangs of anguish and grief. The bosom of resignation alone is open to the sanctifying rays of the Divinity, which by a constant agency, buoy the soul in softened raptures to the cloudless realms of immortality.

The importance of resignation, as it regards our happiness, cannot be denied. Yet by a strange infatuation, it is deemed necessary, only under the perils and trials of life. During the calm and cloudless day, the mariner solicits no assistance from the light house, which is reared on a rugged shore, but gazes after its benignant beams, when tossed on the tempestuous sea through the darkness of night. Thus, mankind under the calm of prosperity, are conveyed along, without any desire of resignation or religion, till the storm of calamity bursts upon their heads. O feeble and presumptuous mortal! are the obligations of an eternal law suspended, because thou art beguiled into a sultry composure by the charm of fiction? Lives thy God, only in the tem-

pest, bows thine obedience, only when he passeth on a pavillion of judgment? Wilt thou make the best of thy pleasures and the most of thy religion? Is thine alienation harmless, because thou art wrapped in the mantle of spiritual slumber? Does the quietude of thine heart betoken thy permanent rest, because thou art now basking in a transient sunshine? Why dost thou forget, that the ingredients of the earthquake are kindling for vengeance, beneath that sultry silence, that precedes the tremenduous shock? Alas! as long as periodical piety will satisfy thy soul, occasional resignation will answer thy wishes!

O! resignation bring us near to our God, while our powers are vigorous to enjoy his presence, and while we are least molested by the pressure of natural ills and disasters. Give us thy precious dainties, while our health is sound, and our relish is alive to their celestial qualities. When our hearts are faint under the burden of the day, afford us thy medicinal assistance. A single odour, poured upon our souls from thy sacred phial, shall give them a holy composure, till they awake to eternal rapture in the bosom of Jesus.

CHAPTER II.

RESIGNATION CONSIDERED AS IT REGARDS THE RENUNCIATION OF OBJECTS.

AMONG the efforts of man none are more vain than those, which are made, in order to ingraft the principles of religion upon a strange and degenerate vine. The smile of security is excited, in thousands, from a belief that they have so artfully incorporated the forms of godliness, with the properties of unregenerate nature, that they will constitute a meritorious assemblage of christian excellencies. If the gospel be known, it is difficult to suppress a suspicion that they are moving in a dulusion, that is of narrow limits and bounded on every side by disappointment and wretchedness. The scions of grace are not to be found on the thorn. The evil tree will always bear a fruit and foliage congenial with its own nature Before we can put on the new man, we must put off the old, with his deeds, which are corrupt. The holy armory of God is opened by Jesus to none, but those who have rejected the weapons of unrighteousness.

Did an apostate condition imply nothing more than deprivation, or a banishment from the reconciled countenance of the Creator, the labors of resignation would be greatly diminished, the sphere of its office comparatively small, and a knowledge of its real nature very

considerably facilitated. But deprivation left the ground work of that character, to which a series of daring iniquities was to give a hideous complexion. While the love of obedience expired in the breast of man, a rebellious spirit, by a fatal intrusion, obtained the possession of his heart. Lost to the unerring guidance of the Eternal Will, he immediately repaired to the suggestions of carnal volition, and wandered in a wilderness of extravagance and enormity. When the Divine glory was veiled from mortal view, he not only turned his restless eyes from the face of heaven, but bade them search the wide realms of dust, for gods, to whom the heart could pour out its incense, and pay its idolatrous homage. The calm serenity of his soul was dissolved and succeeded by the turbulence of a thousand restless passions. The holy altar of meekness and humiliation was demolished at the feet of Jehovah; and pride, with astonishing effrontery, reared a visionary temple on high and from the pinnacle of self-exaltation, waved with impious hands, the ensign of dominion. His intellect was shrouded in darkness; and losing a knowledge to do good, he became wise to do evil. When the affections of his heart ceased to arise from enlightened views of the Divinity, its emotions were excited by phantoms, by the transient charm of temporal objects, and by the variegated scenery which adorns, with a false brilliancy,

the chambers of sensuality. When he no longer regarded the divine glory, as an object of his actions, by a mysterious perversion, his powers were alive to the controling urgency of selfish motives, and in defiance of heaven, wasted his breath in lighting up the flame of his own glory.

No genuine resignation can be discovered in man, till he heartily renounce the works of disobedience. That froward spirit which leads him to trample on the oracles of God, must be rejected, with unqualified abhorrence. How often does this spirit, disregarding the interdictions of conscience and heaven, hurry us into the paths of sinful dissipation and destructive licentiousness! With what power and art, does it disguise the forms of iniquity and make them assume a harmless aspect! How does it wrap in forgetfulness the miseries, which are already accumulated around us, and consign to apathy our noblest sensibilities!

Rebellion always arrogates the character of a benefactor. Sometimes, it holds to our view the pleasures of resentment; again it proposes to deliver us from the pressure of injuries, the painful restraints of virtue, and the thraldom of human laws. It stands in a beckoning attitude at all the aberrations from duty; it promises to tear the frowns from the face of fortune, and give a perpetual smile to the condition of life. By a mysterious influence, we learn to love this monstrous deceiver; and

receive his empty promises, with as much avidity, as though we had experienced some real advantage from the scenes into which we had been blindly conducted. This spirit, therefore, which is so dear in carnal appreciation must not only be suppressed, but thoroughly eradicated. Resignation relinquishes all the works of disobedience, and deposits in oblivion, the weapons of rebellion. No man can be resigned to the laws and government of the Divine Being, till his aversion be entirely removed, and he cease to evade their unabating authority. In short, he can never become truly submissive till the espousals of his soul to the works of darkness be effectually dissolved.

How frequently do the most fatal dangers lurk in ambush under some specious form! Thousands are deceived into a belief, that they are possessed of the grace of resignation, because they avoid the palpable acts of disobedience, and forbear to raise, with unblushing boldness, the weapons of resistance. All this may be produced by the inferior motives of honor and temporal fame. The flesh is often tired into a compliance, when the spirit is at warfare with God. The rebellion of thought and of our secret affections must be slain, before we can be denominated the submissive subjects of the Divine government. The slave with silent and visible composure may perform the works of obedience, while his heart is burning with venom and hatred against his

Lord and Master. Thus when disobedience is openly and vitally relinquished, then, nor till then, can it be hoped we have the least degree of genuine resignation.

An unreserved subjection of the will is an indispensable article in resignation. This is an achievement not to be effectuated by a few philosophic exertions. Natural wisdom may produce an ostensible conformity to the resistless control of general laws. Common sense, itself, would smile at the spectacle, should some daring eagle, beaten by the winter storm, attempt to remove the mountain of her residence into realms of perennial spring.—Nor less would it smile, should it discover a feeble mortal endeavoring to elude his misery, by struggling to effect a change in the operation of immutable laws.

The natural will is a primary agent, in the wretchedness and ruin of the soul. Disdaining the guidance of Jehovah, it lifts a brazen head in contempt of all the wholesome restraints of Heaven; and even exults in a visionary liberty, while the ponderous chains, that are forged by the powers of darkness, are riveted on our necks. It tears itself from the influence of a Divine agency, like some unhappy stream that steals a passage through the bank of a majestic river, wandering in a solitary wilderness, till it precipitate into darksome caverns, and there be converted into a cloud of noxious vapours. It discovers the gates of heaven, but disdains to tread the

valley of meekness, through which alone, they are accessible. Under its imperious dictates, polluted garments are assiduously woven and wrapped about us, while the robes of a Saviour's righteousness are rejected with all the coldness of malignant scorn. All that divine benignity could do, in providing an escape from eternal misery, in ameliorating the condition of the present life, and calling from their slumbers the lovely sentiments of immortality, is scoffed away by its counter determinations. It renders the eloquence of a Saviour's sufferings as unprofitable as the howlings of the desert, and the voice of his blood as unaffecting as the rustling of a leaf. It severs the anchor of hope from our bosoms, and leaves us to the mercy of a tempestuous sea, with the heavens on fire over our heads, with nothing but frost-work to prevent us from sinking to the chambers of death.

The powers of volition are often concealed under the influence of habit, and we learn to evade the impression of criminality, by attributing our actions to unfortunate but unavoidable inclinations, and the circumstances by which we are surrounded. Thus the female, who is tenderly alive to the powers of volition, at the fatal hour of prostitution, scarcely realizes its office any more through a career of misery, guilt and shame till death pours its accumulated horrors upon her hopeless soul. The thief is more sensible of voluntary agency, for the first time he lays a pilfering hand

on some trifling toy, than ever after in entering our threshold at midnight. The corrosions of guilt are generally diminished by the frequency of crimes. This is chiefly owing to the concealment of the regency of the will, under a series of paliating contingencies.—Hence it is, that mankind in general misconstrue a definition, the apostle has given of the carnal mind, and deny its application to themselves and denominate it a kind of harmless non-conformity to the laws of God. This being something of the nature and character of the will, it must be entirely subdued, before we can feel the hallowed influence of true resignation.

One of the greatest conflicts, with which the heart is acquainted, consisteth in renouncing our idol gods. The inclination to worship is strong and universal. It is cherished and supported by all the vicissitudes of terror, hope, misery and joy. The savage feels it awakened within him, when he beholds the angry cloud travelling up the western skies; when it thunders over his head, and when it passes away in awful dispersion. The same inclination is quickened, when he discovers a heaven planted with stars, inverted forests and suspended mountains, reflected from the bosom of the lake. It leads him to invoke his gods, previous to the feats of battle, and prompts him to peals of bewildered praise, when he retires with trophies of victory. It is warmly alive in the heart of the bold ad-

venturer, as he treads the ground of hazard. The indolent coward feels it shoot across his breast in the intervals of gaping languor.—From the splendours of genius to the feeblest gleam of reason; from the magnificent heights of dominion to the deepest cells of servitude, the impulse of this propensity is more or less experienced. The gold is now changed, and the most fine gold become dim. Man no longer beholds the God of heaven, with the lively fervours of affection and reverential attachment. He is beguiled alike from duty and the sources of enjoyment. A spiritual dimness renders imperceptible the glory of his Creator, while a thousand mortal deities swarm into life around him. They engage his heart, he views them with enchanted eyes, clothes them with a finical glory, and consecrates them to immortality. Reason, however aided by the light of revelation, readily discards the delirious scenery of heathen idolatry. Thus the heart has but little conflict, when we strike from their brazen pedestals the gods of the mountains; or when we consign the altars of the valley to mingle with the smoke of the blood that is burned upon them; when this is done, we are often deceived into a belief, that we vitally regard the command that is written by the finger of God, and that the shackles of clay alone prevent our flight to immortal glory. The mantle of charity is scarcely broad enough to cover the folly of that heated votary to intoxication who ex-

ults in the glories of self-denial merely, because he has renounced the rendezvous of nightly revelling and clamorous intemperance. Are the inebriations of his own closet free from poison, harm and guilt? Nor can it fail to excite the sigh of enlightened discretion, when we are heard to announce our piety and prove its residence within us, because our idolatrous services have lost their notoriety and retired into forms less exposed to mortal inspection. There are desires that are feeble and languid in the open face of day, their existence is but faintly felt in the circles of society, and in the throng of court; but at the hour of seclusion, they awake from slumber refreshed into enormous strength and overbearing sway, controling all the powers of thought. And we appeal to the decisions of experience, if the propensities to idolatry are not the most fervent and dangerous, when most secreted from the gaze of the world. It is then our attachments assume a dangerous influence and our alliance to perishable objects become so strangely infatuating. It is then we venture to look upon our gold, and call it our god, and adore with silent love our fancied perfections. We frequently idolize some amiable virtue that has procured us a pleasing eminence, on the scale of distinction. Our souls pour their silent eulogies upon it in all our solitary walks. We vainly clothe it with the attributes of a Saviour, we attach unto it the office of atonement, and make it

the ground of our justification before the council of heaven. We cause it to personate an excellence, at whose approach the gates of immortal glory are spontaneously opened.—Brilliant talents are also deified, with all the zeal of enthusiasm. The writer, the orator and counsellor burn their incense to those faculties which lead to eminence, in their appropriate spheres. Though the high accessions of greatness will for ever mock the toil of my feeble powers; I can recollect, with shame, several instances of extemporary performance, when my mind has been lost to that being, whose name my lips were pronouncing with solemnity, and having no other consciousness for moments, than that of being charmed with the fancied talent of invention and the art of communicating my ideas with a pleasing facility. Alas! the ray that sports in darkness may become our God alike with a full effulgence of exalted genius. The fading gifts of nature command the reverential effusions of our hearts, and this inscription "The chief good," is frequently stamped on the dreams of life. It is no rarity for the female, to devote the morning of life to the shrine of beauty, labouring with unremitting assiduity, to preserve her charms from the dust of oblivion. Art is vain, in attempting, to prolong the abode of her deity in colour and features. He assumes a residence, in wit and satire, and obtains the constant and faithful homage of declining life. That inordinate affection with

which we look at a child, a companion and friend—that subtle enthusiasm which steals our hearts from the Creator, when we survey the charms of nature and art, that fondness with which we contemplate the splendours of our own talents; that infatuation under which we clothe our own virtues with the offices of a Redeemer; all these constitute an idolatry as dangerous to the soul, and as *heinous* in the sight of a holy God, as the golden calves of Dan and Bethel, or the honors that were poured upon the Ephesian Diana.

True resignation relinquishes all these vain attachments. It severs all inordinate affection from the world, it dissolves every illicit attention to created objects, and discerns no loveliness within them, independent of the Divine Being. Phantoms are divested of their enchantment; ideal charms cease to beguile the heart; and the wide field that is peopled with deities, by the plastick power of imagination, is given up to its infernal proprietor the moment in which the spirit of resignation finds an avenue to our bosoms.

Religion is peculiarly fond of quietude and composure. It flies from the noisy scenes of the world, which are ill-suited to its holy exercises. The sublime and even painful sentiments of reverence, which are excited by the roaring of the forest, and by the nightly voice of the thundering cataract, become mild and seraphic as we retire from the more immediate impression of these ma-

jestic sounds. The eloquence of the pulpit, which is generally so little affecting, when poured from the most polished lips of clay, often becomes the eloquence of angels when we repair to our closets, and memory repeats it, in melting accents to the soul. How precious is that evening hour, when ceremonial tumult, and vulgar commotion, have suspended their dominion, and silence broods on the face of nature, when the heavens are wrapped in clouds, and the greatest light we can discover, is the lamp that glimmers through the distant window of kindred piety, which is casting the last look for the night, on some precious promise of Jesus, and rendering her pillow peaceful by sprinkling upon it the incense of prayer ; it is then we feel that purity of affection, and those devotional fervours that are unknown in the crowded assemblies of the world. Lust and passion deprive us of that quietude, which is requisite to religious exercise, and confound all the functions of the soul. Even the tremulous struggles of suppressed passion break the chain of thought, and throw into derangement our intellectual energies. Every hallowed sensation expires at the first pulse of unbridled lust. The intrusion of one licentious desire if often fatal to the incense of contrition, and diffuses a deathly leaven through the serious exercises of the day. Were our passions therefore productive of no other harm, than molesting the tranquality of the

soul, and dissolving the celestial charm of devotion, it is indispensably necessary that they should be renounced without reserve or apology. The propriety of this cannot be denied, when it is considered, that lust and passion live and reign in defiance of the absolute interdiction of heaven. They corrupt the springs of life, and blot every trace of the heavenly image from our souls, and stamp upon us a shame and guilt that are indelible to every remedy but the blood of Christ. Every species of aspiring arrogance is given up in the act of resignation. Pride is an odious monster, it borrows strength from destruction, obstinacy from death, and artifice from the adversary of souls; making all the infuriate passions of the heart subsidiary to its impious designs. The earth groans beneath its feet, the poor are galled by its relentless oppression, slaves are compelled to unbowel mountains, in search of glittering dust to form its gorgeous trappings, and even the silk-worm is reproved for not weaving with sufficient brilliancy the garments of grandeur. With unblushing insolence it remonstrates against the divine administration, especially when the wheels of providence crush the schemes of personal aggrandizement and derange the career of ambition under a propitious concurrence of events, it raises in swelling strains, the voice of exaltation, and monopolizes the use of sun and stars together with the gifts and bounties of nature. Dis-

daining to bow at the feet of Jesus, it climbs the skies with Babel aid, and claims an exalted seat in the chambers of glory In surveying the character of such glaring and presumptuous pride, our souls recoil from its empire ; the sentiments of gratitude kindle within us, and we proclaim our thanks, that it never has obtained the possession of our hearts. Though the circumstances of life have prevented our treading the highest paths of ostentation and vanity, it is no evidence that this evil spirit has not a more secret throne in our hearts, diffusing an influence fatal to the birth and growth of every pious and holy principle. The outward observance of religious duties constitutes the dress of vital piety ; so that haughty deportment and towering greatness, which trample down the world, are but the habiliments of that inward pride against the Almighty. Thus the disallowance and practical rejection of the haughty forms of arrogance, furnish but a pitiful proof that we are real possessors of evangelical reconciliation. We are all exposed to a spiritual pride which is peculiarly subtle, officious and dangerous. This often reveals itself, when in mourning tones, we announce our former vileness and sinful habits, spreading at the same time, with exultation, that spotless robe with which we are invested, before the eye of publick observance, and in the style of ancient pride, proclaiming our joy that we are not like other

men. Alas! how frequent are the virtues, honesty, temperance and meekness consumed, in the pride of possesion like the fever, that plants the crimson blush of health on the cheek, while its latent fires are consuming the springs of life. As plain as print in letters of gold we may read the existence of pride on the eyes of visible meekness, while it is describing the humble path in which it chooses to walk, in contrast with the eclat of courtly magnificence. We are proud, also, of the honor and services we pay our Creator, as if he were profited by our imaginary benefactions. It is within the deceit of our hearts to be proud in our triumphs over the spirit of pride. Herculean exertions may strangle the serpent, while the blaze of selfish glory, in which the deed is done, gives birth to the noxious viper. The doctrine of transmigration applies with truth to the spirit of pride. It mysteriously flies from form to form, preserving its identity, under a thousand different shapes. To extract its deep enwoven roots from our nature, to demolish its influence and reject it from life and practice, is an important branch in the great work of resignation. And as an arm that could wield a globe, would be insufficient to this event, without the assistance of divine grace; so all boasting is absolutely excluded, and he that glorieth must glory in the Lord with meekness and fear. There is a kind of pleasure that accompanies the feats of ingenuity

and schemes of refined and successful artifice. The thief and robber very probably smile away the sense of guilt, at the moment, in which invention discovers a way to enter the bolted portals of a neighboring house. The vile seducer is pleased with the arts by which he is alluring unsuspecting innocence to the altar of eternal infamy. The turpitude of his deeds, and the indignation of heaven are alike forgotten in the charm which his seductive powers create. The author will never forget an evening in which he was passing, at a late hour, by a country prison, when the surrounding silence was broken by peals of laughter, that issued from the grates of a lower apartment of the dreary mansion. Curiosity led him to investigate, if possible, the cause of joy in this dark cell of convicted criminality. He heard the colloquy of two malefactors. One related the seductive art and intrigue, by which he had baffled the vigils of maternal affection, and allured a blooming daughter of endearment, from the bower of innocence and virtue, through the gates of everlasting shame. The other in return, gave a narrative of his former tricks of legerdemain at the gaming table, and the schemes of artifice by which he had deprived an orphan of a legal inheritance, without ever incurring the suspicion of the world.

Franklin could never have related the manner in which he acquired a harmless famil-

iarity with the lightning of heaven, with any greater pleasure than what seemed to pervade the hearts of these wretches. Had their guilt for that moment been written in letters of fire on the darkness of their dungeon, it would scarcely have commanded their notice. The author retired very deeply affected with the discovery of a new feature in human depravity. The infidel derives a pleasure from his own wit and sophistry, that gives him a kind of security, while he tramples upon the authority of God. He is enraptured with the inventions of his own genius, that have taught him to discover in man the principles of perfectability, and to guide the impenitent multitude in triumph to the land of rest. The delicious fondness of "hewing out to ourselves, cisterns, broken "cisterns, that can hold no water;" the delicious enthusiasm of figuring largely in the labours of infidelity, must bow and expire at the shrine of resignation. There the employments and inventions, that are unsanctioned by the divine approbation, are stripped of their charms and cease for ever to be objects of pursuit.

The scenery of sensuality is clothed with enchantment. Its influence often controuls our tender years, exciting affections and attachments, that are not easily subdued. At that early period, when our morning and evening prayers are but an irksome task, performed chiefly with a view to soften the vis-

age of conscious guilt; even then, we learn and chant with wakeful avidity, the voluptuous song, the double entendre sallies of wit, and anticipate with high enthusiasm, the luxurious and clamorous gambols of a public day. These native propensities, fostered by habit, and encouraged by fashion, soon become so many resistless desires, seeking their gratification through all the mazes of licentiousness. The evanescence of sensual and worldly charms, does not abate the zeal with which we pursue them. We refuse to learn that mortal objects are of mortal worth, but are scientific, in the work of excluding the Divinity from our meditations and the momentous concerns of the soul from our tho'ts. To reject from our prospects, the enamouring pictures of sensual pleasures, to eradicate from the heart our vain attachments, is a task of resignation, that is marked with peculiar conflict. Though the voluptuary and the votary to the world dread it as they dread the extinction of light, it must be performed according to the indispensable requisitions of our holy religion. For resignation for ever implies in its subjects, a lively enjoyment of a God, in whose sight the heavens are pronounced unclean. His spotless glory and excellence are far above the discernment of the impure in heart and conversation. Though we believed, in conformity to modern theology, that depravity originates entirely from habit, we could not deny the necessity of surrendering

all the heart polluting vanities of time, in order that a view of Divine glory may pour its influence upon our souls and kindle the sacred fires of holy affection. We cannot fail to partake of the nature and character of the objects, with which we delight to converse.—They infuse their properties into the sources of life, by a thousand invisible avenues. Do we visit the cells of a prison? we partake of its gloom and breathe our involuntary responses to the sighs of wretchedness. The chamber of gaiety and extravagance, prints its gaudy images on the mind of its affectionate visitor, images that maintain their residence over the ruins of celestial sensibility, and to the rejection of every thing that is truly valuable. The mere spectator to the allurements of the world, who guards against their power and denies them a place in his bosom, is frequently doomed to experience their mysterious influence. The traveller upon the sands of an intemperate climate, may not intend to suffer the loss of his blooming looks, but at the end of his journey the mirror will inform him, that he has received something of a sallow complexion. A lewd thought will obscure, for days, our vision of God, and mingle with an unsavory tincture the incense of our devotions. Thus our ascension from the path of depravity and the enjoyment of our Creator, require us to dissolve connexion with the vanities of the world, and to embrace those objects alone, which tend to purity and real glory.

Resignation renounces every claim to an incorruptible inheritance, that has for its support nothing more than the specious forms of external virtue. The city of Zion is accessible to none, but those who have left behind them their polluted garments, and are clothed in whitened raiments the imputed righteousness of their Redeemer. Without the purifying illuminations of faith, we must stumble on the dark mountains below. All the labours of the resigned, as it respects the renunciation of things, must be seasonable and voluntary. In order to experience the consolatory evidences, in favour of the possession of this grace, forbidden exercises must be suppressed and unlawful attachments abandoned, while we are susceptible of their enchantment. For it would furnish but a poor assurance, were we to wait for the lingering languors of age to procure the death of our worldly affections. To forsake the realms of debauchery, because the flame of our lust was extinguished; to relinquish the vanities of life, because they have tired out the emotions of the heart, would but stain the laurels of resignation. The triumphs of victory must always depend upon previous conflict and conscious danger. Having revolted from our God, we must surrender ourselves to his arms, entrusting life and all its concerns to the righteous disposal of his providence, rejoicing that "the hearts of kings are in his "hands, and he turneth them, as the rivers "of water are turned."

CHAPTER III.

RESIGNATION CONSIDERED AS IT REGARDS THE EXERCISES OF THE HEART AND MIND IN MEETING THE EVENTS OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

IN considering resignation, with regard to the temper and disposition with which we meet the events of providence, its existence can hardly be imagined, separate from the light of the knowledge of God. Ignorance, combined with a thousand groundless fears and empty hopes, constitutes a great portion of the degrading shades of human life. In the dark forest of ignorance, the howlings of man and beast are mingled together; and traces of superiority, in the former, are but in few respects, very clearly discernible. There the incense of bewildered prayer is poured out to appease the wrath of the tempest; and praise is offered to the stars of fortune, to purchase for themselves and unborn generations, a share in the perpetual smiles of prosperity. There, likewise, are the altars that are inscribed to the UNKNOWN GOD. Revelation, however, opens in a glorious display, those attributes of the Divinity, which at once demand our devout regard, and contain in themselves the reasons of unreserved submission. Can we discern by faith and be confirmed by our understanding, that righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne?

We cheerfully reconcile our hearts to the control of events, according to the councils of his will. Herein consisteth the difference between evangelical resignation, and blind submission to the varying contingencies of chance or to the destinies of a merciless fate.

We often reconcile ourselves to events, without tracing to its source, that holy agency through which they are brought to pass.—We learn to bear, with unmurmuring bravery, the chastisements of providence, while we neither reverence nor discern the Sovereign hand, that brings them upon us. Men of distinguished talents may be veiled from a view of the fountain and admire its remotest streams, not knowing whence they flow.—Their bosoms are alive with the emotions of gratitude, under the reception of providential bounties. They bless that spot of earth which rewards their toil with a luxurious harvest. They look with a thankful smile, upon that vine whose clusters have cheered their hearts. They acknowledge, with frankness, the benefactions of their fellow creatures, while God is not in their thoughts. Thus, is it not a solitary mystery, that we can endure bereavement, and submit ourselves to the unavoidable ills and disappointments of life, while the governor of the universe has no place, in our acknowledgments? Our claims to resignation are insupportable and vain, unless we have been favoured with the experience of holy affections and celestial attachments. The gi-

ants of carnal enmity, may be compelled to suspend their visible struggles, by superior physical power, yea, they may submit to the power of God's might, when the crimson flames of wrath incessantly flash from their eyes. It is written, his enemies shall submit, and it is not improbable that the demons of darkness shall discern the justice of God, while it is utterly impossible, that they should ever feel the feeblest emotions of Divine love. A cold assent to the rectitude of heaven and the propriety of providential dealings, would furnish a very uncertain criterion of a reconciled and sanctified spirit. We often feel a composure under the adverse and calamitous events of life. Reason and pride reject, with scorn, the habit of murmuring as a degrading weakness; and yet the charms of heaven are not so highly appreciated as the museum that is peopled with wax-work figures and gaudy paintings.

The illuminations of grace present us with scenes entirely new, and such views of the Divinity and his works, as suffuse the heart with the sacred influences of love. The soul thus affected, is strengthened in its energies, and its powers are appropriated to purposes, fruitful of delight and edification. It reverences the controller of events and gathers the peaceable fruits of righteousness, as it journeys through the path of sorrow. Its affections suffer no languishment from the chastisement it is doomed to feel. Bereavement

and grief are but the frowning tempest, that quicken the motion of the mighty passenger, creating pain and terror in his breast, which prepare him to welcome with greater joy, the effulgence of morning, and greet with purer raptures the moorings of the harbour.

The designs of God, in many events, are veiled from view and inscrutable to the most laborious researches of man. The combined energies of reason and faith are incompetent to explore the ends he intends to effectuate, by his holy providences. Many scenes, dark and forbidding, usher in upon us benefits and blessings, which the most vigilant hope had never apprehended. Other scenes there are, which wear a propitious countenance, and seem loudly to nominate the advantages, they are intended to produce; but in the twinkling of an eye, they are swept away by the floods of adversity. There are not a few things, in Divine providence, that are of doubtful tendency in human calculation. Resignation is exalted and glorious in conveying the soul to the arms of Jehovah; entrusts its concerns to the counsels of infinite wisdom and goodness. Were some particular temporal good immediately brought about, by every afflictive visitation, the temples of submission would be filled with the smoke of incense, offered by the hands of selfishness and depravity. The world are in a habit of purchasing their pleasures by fatigue and hazard. Thus in conformity with our natural propensities, we

should cheerfully submit to a chastisement, that is the price and purchase of an overbalancing favour. The wearied beggar would never hesitate to present his naked limbs to the storm, would it procure for him a vesture of purple and fine linen and a corresponding style of magnificence. The mother would feel but a momentary agony, in having her infant torn from her bosom by the hand of death, were she assured that the cares and ills of life would thereby be diminished, and her pleasures enhanced. The soldier would scarcely sigh on leaving his limbs in the field of battle, were the event to procure a crown for his head.

Alive to the sentiments of Divine rectitude; believing in the unerring wisdom of God; the subject of grace is reconciled to dispensations, that betoken no temporal benefit, but even forbid the adventurous conjectures of hope. Is he a parent? he may be deprived of an only child, upon whose filial benignity he had looked to sooth the pangs of age and to aid his tottering steps, through the path of infirmity to the grave. The daughter is often doomed to an orphan condition, in those tender years when virtue solicits the protection of maternal vigilance, and innocence pleads for that salutary counsel which but seldom falls from the lips of a stranger. When the reasons of her calamity are wrapped in mystery, and hope is lost in searching for beneficial effects, resignation leads her to the feet of Jesus, where no murmuring sigh escapes

her bosom, but has an indubitable belief that the Judge of the earth will do right.

Ancient piety has furnished a very clear illustration of this doctrine. When the Patriarch was called to go out and to relinquish for ever, those scenes which were endeared by familiarity; the advantages to be derived from a toilsome pilgrimage were unrevealed before him, but believing in God that he was good, cheerfully submitted and went out not knowing whither he went. The scene on Moriah, must have rendered impracticable the anticipation of particular good. The designs of God were secreted from the researches of the illustrious saint. Presumption itself could not have hoped that a son, or a band of sons, would arise from the ashes of Isaac, or that the advent of the Messiah would be hastened or rendered more certain, by the extinction of that seed, from which the promise had announced his descent. While surrounded with clouds and darkness, he lifts his eyes to heaven and submits to the will of God. Had Jacob discerned that chain of glorious events, which was connected with the removal of the object of his doating affection, resignation would scarcely have been denominated a virtue. Far from this, he bows at the feet of Jehovah, while the tears of sorrow were streaming from his eyes and his heart throbbing with anguish; and while no prospects of benefit suppressed the fear, that his grey hairs would be brought with sorrow to the grave.

It was among the counsels of heaven to vindicate its laws edifying the church; and also to purify the heart and enlarge the understanding of Job, by those unparalleled afflictions, which he was called to experience. When he adopted the language of resignation, exclaiming the Lord gave and the Lord taketh away, and blessed be the name of the Lord, he knew not that Zion was to receive any additional rays of glory from those grievous visitations, or that his own knowledge would be increased, his views corrected, and that it should be said for ever, that God blessed the latter end of Job more than the beginning.

Thus genuine resignation maintains its influence over the heart and will, while the benefits of bereavement and grievous calamity are hidden, in the impenetrable and pathless fields of futurity; and it is left to the toils of faith to assure us, that all things shall work together for the good of the tranquil sons and daughters of humility, redounding also to the high praises of Jehovah.

It is the current opinion of the world, that notorious criminality alone, is justly exposed to peculiar afflictions. The judicial visitation that arrested the enormous guilt, in the camp of Israel, and the labours of the destroying angel, at the tower of Siloam, are clearly accountable. When the viper had leaped from the fire. and fastened itself upon the hand of Paul, the barbarians accounted for the event,

conjecturing that his abomination had been so great, that divine vengeance would suffer him no longer to live. Thus we are less perplexed, in vindicating the ways of providence to others, than to ourselves. We discern their guilt, in magnified forms, and reject the persuasion that our own lives contain iniquities of sufficient magnitude to forfeit our claims to Divine benignity, and expose us to a series of afflictive events. Hence so many of the children of calamity are found who suspend submission, enquiring what evil have we done that we should thus be doomed to the severest chastisements? Deeply impressed on my memory, is a scene which excited both pity and astonishment. A man, whose character was composed of injustice, lewdness, intemperance, profanity and daring blasphemy, had detected a child in the habits of falsehood.—He lectured him in the following manner: "My son, lying is a sin of scarlet colour and crimson dye. Of this you have been wilfully guilty. You have planted the blush of shame on the face of your connexions; you have polluted your reputation, by your own unhallowed lips; you have robbed me of the pleasure, which I once felt, in calling you my son. You have forfeited the confidence of man, and exposed yourself to that suspicion, whose scornful looks are like poisoned arrows in the heart. O my son, my soul trembles for you, lest the Arbiter of heaven arise, in his wrath, and consign you to everlasting pun-

ishment." Our aptness to discern the iniquity of others, and the ignorance that veils from view, the true complexion of our own hearts, both serve to facilitate evasions from the power of solemn truth. It is said that but few shall be saved. With little difficulty, in our own conceptions, we procure a place in company with that precious few. We look back into antiquity; we survey the countless tribes that lived before the flood, whose daring transgressions provoked the wrath of heaven; we bring into view the armies of Israel, who despised the Oracles of God, who sinned at the foot of Sinah; we unite, with ease, the unbelieving Jews, who killed the Prophets and poured their vengeance upon the head of the Redeemer. Again we turn to the debauched armies that ravaged the world, and to those Heathen nations who have swarmed around their idols, mingling the blood of infants with their sacrifices. We ruminate the fields of later guilt, and there discern, in immense groups, the riotous, the blasphemous, the oppressive, the intemperate and prostitute; and in comparison with all these, we denominate ourselves beings of a superior order. They have rendered themselves obnoxious to the Divine displeasure. They have thronged the broad road that leads to ruin, and left room for us to travel that narrow path, that leads to the gates of salvation. This is our security, in a state of darkness and self-deception. But hark! the Almighty hath said, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

Far different are the views and feelings of the children of resignation. In looking upon the world, they dare not, they cannot entertain the belief, that they are formed of purer dust, than their fellow creatures. Under the illuminating influences of the spirit, they discover their turpitude, their rising corruptions, their moral and spiritual distempers, together with the plague that broods upon their hearts. They reject, as a presumptuous effort of self-justification, the enquiry, what have we done that we are thus pointed out as marks for the arrows of calamity? From the humblest attitude of submission, they recognize the rectitude of divine providence. Those sins which they are able to recollect, and the thousands which are now lost to the scrutinous toils of reflection, excite their astonishment that their afflictions are so few and light, that they are chastised with the rod of lenity, instead of a cluster of scorpions. When feeling and fortitude are in conflict, their celestial guardian gives triumph to fortitude, and to feeling that tender melancholy that awakens the precious sentiments of immortality.

Pain is considered as the grand preventive of enjoyment. The blessings of peace vanish away under the fatal influence of its relentless sceptre. Endeavors to escape from its empire are prompted by nature, and rendered laudable when exerted in conformity to the dictates of our holy religion. Error, however, and that of the most dangerous kind, is em-

braced in our earnest attempts to avoid misery. At the present day, and even in the christian world, many are found repairing to the temples of stoic philosophy, to imbibe the petrifying incense, from its brazen censer. Do they learn to visit, with indifference, the chambers of distressed humanity, or to tread the thorny path of affliction, without a groan or even the spasm of a nerve? The acquisition is not very desirable, since it must destroy a capacity of sympathetic pleasure, and consign to apathy the finest sensibilities of the heart. Could we take from the tender vine, its susceptiblity of suffering, by the chilling frost, no longer would it smile under the nutritious dews of the morning, or flourish under the benign salutation of the sun. Thus it is possible for man to be deluded into a belief, that he is resigned to the Divine will, because he can endure, without very painful emotions, the afflictive dispensations of providence.

It may be the condition of that peculiar number who maintain the highest claims to piety, chiding with indignity the tears of afflicted sensibility, converting every sigh of sorrow into a symptom of irreconciliation, they enumerate their bereavements, with an inflated prowess, which better becomes the soldier than the christian; and announce their consciousness of having been purified in the furnace without feeling the fire, and cheerfully submit beforehand to pass it again, that the few remaining particles of dross may be de-

stroyed and leave the gold seven times purified. The suspicion that such men have more stoicism than religion, cannot easily be suppressed. For what are chastisements from the hand of God, when they neither wound nor grieve the spirit, nor cause a pang of sorrow to the heart? Well might the rebellious child smile beneath the rod, were his body defended with a coat of mail, and well might he anticipate with perfect composure, the frequent repetition of the scene. Our feelings are the medium, through which the salutary influences of affliction are conveyed, by grace, to the soul. Resignation, therefore, does not require the extinction of our tender affections, but preserves inviolate every nerve of sensation, not forbidding the sorrows of the heart to rise, but soothing them gradually into a hallowed rest at the feet of Jesus, who once wept and groaned and pleaded, with submission to God's will, that the cup might pass from him.

The beneficial effects of calamity depend upon our realizing that, for the present, they are painful and grievous. This evidently tends to contrition of heart, to a humble and thorough repentance, gives frequency to our intercessions, and, by evincing our frailty, excites in our bosoms, the sentiments of divinity. Yet we all strive to suppress those wounded affections, which promise, through grace, our edification. Are we afflicted? We pursuade ourselves to believe it requisite to wear off the impressions of chastisement. For this pur-

pose we recur to the vanities of the world and to its most gaudy scenes, with this plausible reason, that sorrow may not brood on the springs of life, till they are exhausted, and that we may more easily submit to the divine will. We often suppose, that we have obtained resignation, when we have only stifled our grief, and committed our bereavements to forgetfulness. The amusements of time and the necessary concerns of life speedily erase the impressions of grief. The tranquil feelings, which are then experienced, furnish no substantial evidence of pious submission. Resignation inclines her possessors to bless the Lord, when the wounds of chastisement are throbbing with anguish. When the drops of agony were rolling from the bosom of the Redeemer, he submitted to the will of the Father.

Personal evil assails us on every side, through all the stages of life. The innocence of the cradle groans beneath its pressure, and both form and features are thrown into distortions, which nothing but the grave will remove.—Childhood and youth have no asylum from its dreadful intrusions. In middle age, it is a frequent and irksome visiter, and in old age, it is an inseparable companion. Burdens of this denomination are alleviated and rendered supportable by resignation. Deformity is a personal evil, whose grievous effects can be conceived only by those who are doomed to feel them. Do they journey? The gaze of

wonder is upon them, curiosity notes them, as subjects of sarcastic conversation in those circles, where men and manners are discussed with unwearied eloquence. The heights of promotion are far above the hope of aspiration, and many of those animating objects, that influence others to noble pursuits, are beheld with despair. They are capable of friendly attachments; their hearts are susceptible of the mysterious impressions of love; they are alive to the endearments of connubial life, which are painted to extravagance by a restless imagination. Beauty, however, forbids their approach and deprives them of the prospect of possessing her charms; yea they are not favoured with the transient, trembling pleasure of avowing their attachment. Thus they are driven into solitude, from whose melancholy cells, they view those passing scenes of the world, in which they are denied a participation. Resignation, the commiserating guardian of her votaries, flies to their relief. Solitary devotion and a train of useful thoughts become more precious than all the blessings of personal elegance and corporeal energy. Fame and fashion, with parade of pomp and grandeur, are deemed but vanity. She conveys them to the impartial Jesus, whose love is as dear to the heart of the maimed beggar as to kings and princes. They look up to that holy hand, which maketh them to differ, with a sustaining faith, that he will raise them, in glorious bodies, from

the dust; clothe them with celestial robes; give them an entrance into the mansions above, to live and love for ever, with the great Bridegroom of the church.

A small number of the human race are appointed to experience that personal evil, which consisteth in the loss of sight. The pleasures of vision are so exquisite and precious, and perpetual darkness so dreadful, that the world wonders from what sources we derive our comfort, and what causes procure our tranquility. Religion is never at a loss in furnishing entertainments for its true disciples. Its treasures are for ever open to the access of suppliant souls. Many of the distracting objects and ensnaring allurements of the world are hidden in that darkness, by which we are surrounded, and leave us the privilege of attending to momentuous concerns, with a more inviolate assiduity. The perspectives of nature and her objects are delightful: this delight, however, is not extinguished by the blindness of the natural eye. The traveller often receives the greatest pleasure from his tour, after he has returned to the bosom of his family. Memory then presents him with a portrait of the scenes, through which he has passed. The windings and length of the way; the objects of art, by which it was adorned; the towering mountains clothed with grandeur; the vallies, with their meandering streams; forests, interspersed with vineyards; all these, in beau-

tiful colour and arrangement, come in sweet memorial upon his mind. Scenes of public parade are a kind of game, which magnanimity having once seen, will never repine, though it be allowed to see them no more. The smiles of affection are transfused from heart to heart. A benignant look and those pleasing airs, that betoken attachment, convey, with electric speed, a cheering influence through the circle of friendly association. Deprived of these, there is a kind of recompence for the heart, that is calm and resigned. The voice of a friend salutes our ears, like the music that wakes us from sleep, in the silence of night. Our repose, in the season of retirement, suffers no molestation from our bereavement ; our dreams are more rarely terrific, and more frequently pure and delightful. They draw around us the scenery of nature in true colours ; and we often find ourselves in a train of agreeable thoughts, supplicating the throne of grace, with all the fervours of hope. It is probable, however, that a murmuring spirit could never experience this delightful repose. By the loss of sight we are deprived of many transient pleasures, and the sphere of usefulness is greatly diminished. We are driven into a retirement, that is gloomy to our first approach. Resignation, however, renders it comfortable, dispels its horrors, and removes the irksomeness of time. There the heart cherishes the finest feelings, and awakens in itself the purest sen-

timents of devotion. Things of a spiritual nature, the momentous realities of eternity furnish the mind with a noble and salutary employment. Our hopes and faith transfer us to that period, when darkness shall die, and the light of Divine knowledge shall no longer sport in troubled clay.

Sickness and corporeal distress do not commonly suspend the exercises of the heart and will. The importance and efficacy of prayer are readily acknowledged, by the subjects of pain and languishment. The sons of pride discover, with trembling, the vanity of their own strength. Disease, at once, darkens and changes their prospects, and places the riches and grandeur of the world on the list of fleeting phantoms. Their refuges are swept away, and they recoil from the unknown scenes of futurity. They call upon aged piety to plead for their relief, and they ask an interest in the public prayers of the saints. The sick bed devotions of the resigned are not the fruit of fear and distressing apprehensions; they are suggested by grace, offered in faith, and cause the soul to triumph, when the flesh is weak, and the heart fails. At intervals, Divine light and love overwhelm the pains and languors of disease, and furnish a delight, that surpasses description. Realizing the rectitude of heaven, they endure, with patience, whatever is providentially brought upon them. Every rising murmer is repelled by the thought, that their sufferings, when compared

with the sufferings of Christ, are no more than the mist on a plant to the waters of an ocean. The grievous arrest from the enjoyment of health, is regarded as a chastisement, and the seasonable admonition of a benevolent father. They are solicitous to devote a reprieved life to the service of their great benefactor, to have their hearts alive with gratitude, and their lips obedient to the claims of Divine goodness. Thus they arise from the beds of sickness, to brighter views of heaven and an increased purity of life.

Poverty not only dooms its subjects to the paths of obscurity, but also makes them experience bitter sufferings of body and mind. The parent is shivering over the feeble blaze of the faggot, or a few expiring embers. She deals out in small portions, the earnings of the day to her pleading offspring, but hears them exclaim in sobbing accents, we have not enough! This, with other incidents peculiar to poverty, is hard and trying to parental tenderness. Being resigned, however, to the Divine will, and having a conscience void of the guilt of sloth, they submit themselves unto the care of God, who feedeth the ravens when they cry. Their cottages resound with the voice of prayers at that morning hour, when nothing but the breath of slumber is heard in the mansions of the rich and great. From the toils of industry they receive at noon the penurious portion of Divine bounty, with joy and gratitude; having acknowledged the preserving

goodness of their heavenly father, while thousands in splendid life are rioting at the tables of affluence, without one grateful impression on their hearts. Destitute, here on earth, they search for food, that can never perish, and for raiment, that will never fade. By faith they taste of clusters, that are brought from Canaan, and aspire after the riches of the love and knowledge of the Redeemer.

In mourning the loss of friends, the exercises of resignation are clear and distinguishing. We behold, with heartrending grief the ravages of death upon our connexions. The child, with its attracting charms and loveliness, languishes and expires in our sight.—The companion, that excited the first pulse of love in the heart, and to whom we have unfolded the secrets of the soul, is torn from our arms by the king of terrors. The social friend and benefactor is arrested and laid in the cold chambers of the grave. Bereavements like these, are painful and distressing to the bosom of surviving affection. Alas! there is lamentation and mourning for the removal of kindred souls, from the dove that mourns on the roof of the tower, to the incarnate Divinity in tears. The anxiety, that is felt concerning the deceased in the world of spirits, is a bitter ingredient, that lurks in the cup of affliction. This is taken away by the influences of resignation, and the soul is enabled to commit its dearest objects to the disposal of Divine pleasure, and to repose a willing confidence

in the dealings of that God, whose throne is for ever spotless, and whose counsel shall stand. It is natural to humanity to regret the loss of endearing objects, as it deprives us of the benefits and entertainments, that are derived from them. This regret loses its poignancy by the first act of reconciliation, and the heart is left to the melting sentiments of gratitude, that we are allowed to enjoy, so long, such precious and enamouring objects. Those who are possessed of a froward and murmuring spirit, refuse to receive any useful and salutary instructions from the volumes of nature and inspiration, and they can derive no very lasting advantage from affliction. The loss of friends suspends their worldly schemes. They are impressed with the frailty of man, with the transitory nature of earthly joys. Serious thoughts and impressions are unavoidable, for a time, but their continuance is short, and they are gone, like inscriptions that are made on the sand. On the other hand, the hearts of the resigned are constantly open to the reception of useful knowledge, being disciplined and enlightened by the gospel of the Redeemer, nature with all her objects, Divine providence with all its events, unite in pouring their radiance upon their souls. Affliction impresses upon them the vanity of the world and the precarious tenure of mortal life. They are weaned from the world, and they strive to enter into that rest, which remaineth for the people of God. On this subject resig-

nation thus writes from the chamber of bereavement.

"*Sympathizing friend,*

"Much violence would be done to my present propensities, should I forbear to inform you of the recent exercises of my heart. You have probably heard, that by the holy hand of providence, I am now numbered, with the daughters of sorrow. Alas! the object, that was dearest to my heart, is no more. The separation was distressing. I received his cold hand, I pressed it to my throbbing bosom! Its pulse faltered, lingered, and failed for ever. I witnessed the last gasp of dissolving nature. I was overwhelmed with anguish; all joy was darkened; my spirit was restless, and raised its murmurs against the counsels of Heaven. At length, the signal night arrived, when my soul was tossed with agony. Delirium began to throw its bewildering mist around me, my sins arose before me, in terrific array. I seemed to swim over an immeasurable abyss, with the breath, that held me up, nearly exhausted. The moment, in which I was rescued from these distracting thoughts, my eyes were opened to a discovery of that being, against whom I had maintained a daring warfare. The tear of contrition started. I prayed and resigned myself to the great Judge of the earth. I fell into a quiet slumber. The morning returned and gave me a heart sustaining experience of sovereign grace. The world and all its objects now

wear an aspect entirely new. The bitter anguish of a bereaved heart is allayed, and leaves to feeling and affection, that softened sorrow, that is so favorable to pious thoughts, to holy exercises, and an unspotted life. Instructions are written upon every passing scene; they address the heart, and are transcribed into the tablet of the mind. I often walk on that ground, where the deceased sleep. The cold ashes of the dead; the little lines, that mark the grave of the infant; the stanzas, that speak the praise of aged excellence; these inspire a melancholy delight, which I would not exchange for the wholeamount of courtly pleasure. I retire again to my solitary residence. Devotion, the fair daughter of the skies, pours her sacred consolations into my bosom, and in this vale of tears and trouble, endears the love of life, by mingling with it the hopes of a blissful immortality."

Property commands our early attention, and excites, in the heart, by its fascinating glare, a desire of possession. We find it requisite in procuring the conveniences and good things of life, and deem it indispensable in ascending the path of splendour and secular greatness. We view it as a defence against the encroachments of care and trouble, and as a refuge of safety at home and abroad, and as a shining mantle, that covers the nakedness of the soul. This attachment to wealth is cherished by the personal benefits it affords, and is inflamed into unbounded lust by the opin-

ion and example of others, who believe it to be the pearl of price, and spare no toil of body or mind, in its acquisition.

Considering the strength and prevalence of the love of property, and our constant exposure to be forced from its enjoyment, by a variety of events that could not be anticipated in the wisest calculation, by the intrigues of artifice and envy, by the want of prudential care in ourselves, and by the immediate judgments of Heaven, it is evident that the unresigned are in jeopardy concerning their character and eternal interest. In descending from the height of opulence to the paths of want, magnanimity and resignation are as needful as a holy life to the enjoyment of God. This change of condition, while the heart is not reconciled, is accompanied, with a bitter regret and torturing chagrin. It either depresses their spirits, producing a fatal languor or rouses, to lawless energy, the powers of invention. The honest earnings of industry are rejected as sporting atoms, and a state of wealth and magnificence must be regained by the daring hand of injustice, that grasps at the bread of the widow and the raiment of the orphan, and encompasses by artifice, the treasures of the rich and faithful labourer.

The love of hazard also is a common companion of mortified and despairing pride; and irreconciliation under the loss of property, disdaining the government of Heaven, repairs to the chances of game, to become reinstated in

splendour by the midnight, but fashionable robbery of others. Do we force from the untutored child a part of its pleasing toys! With angry and revengeful gestures, it will thrust the remainder to the ground. This disposition is not always removed by the combined influence of age, discipline and civil refinement. The jewel has been committed to the flames in that frenzied moment, when our property and equipage are taken by the hand of authority, to answer a just demand. Thus, when bereaved of the world, the unresigned are liable from passion and revenge against the destinies of providence, to sacrifice in wilfulness the love of virtue; to trample their own characters in the dust; to commit chastity itself to the altar of prostitution; and sink into intemperance and licentiousness, whence they arise no more. Allowing that these are rare and extreme cases, yet those who have more firmness and fortitude, but no resignation, are doomed by their losses to consequences unhappy and dreadful. They are oppressed by an anxiety that poisons enjoyment; that discolours, inverts and confounds the objects around them. They are deprived of that quietude and peace of mind, so necessary to the improvement of talents and the cultivation of the amiable and social virtues. It sours the mind, defiles the taste, creating a peevish and murmuring disposition.

In the eye of religious appreciation, property is considered as a loan of bounty, conven-

ient and necessary, enlarging the sphere of usefulness and heightening our responsibility. It is a mere temporal blessing, and not exempt from sorrowful influence in a dying hour. Peradventure our riches may be transferred to the hands of our inveterate enemies, and consumed in the revel and riot of those who would delight to disturb the dust of our grave. Do we call upon great possessions at the close of life? they cannot alleviate the pangs of dissolution; they cannot remove the dread of death, nor purchase a happy passage through its dreary valley. A single ray of faith is better than all the glimmering of an earthly treasure; a drop of atoning blood is of more worth than the possession of worlds. These thoughts upon riches have frequent access to the resigned heart. Uninterrupted prosperity enfeebles and extinguishes the humiliating and salutary sentiments of dependence. The loss of property administers a chastisement upon our pride and self-sufficiency, and restores us to the feelings of gratitude and the useful impressions of our dependency. No spectacle can exhibit more greatness of soul, than a son of resignation descending from the heights of wealth into the impoverished walks of life; bathing every step in the incense of devotion; exclaiming, it is gone, but it was not my God; invoking the virtues of holy life; the smiles of Jesus transfusing their benignity into his heart and looks, and

making his very sighs betoken a noble and unrepining magnanimity.

The diminution of our treasures by providential events, may be overruled to our great advantage. We may be excited to appropriate what still remains to benevolent and useful purposes. Genius also may be roused from the slumbers of indolence, and bless the world with its luminous labours. We are taught that happiness does not arise entirely from external and fluctuating objects, that parade and plenty are not always the surest indications of substantial enjoyment. Our attention is turned within ourselves, and we labour to store the mind with the riches that Heaven delights to protect, and to possess that gold which is liable neither to dimness nor to change and which is equally valuable, when we journey or when we repair to the calmer scenes of solitude. As the supports of property are taken away, the love of character is fervently cherished, and we find in an unspotted life that protection which affluence could never afford. When our secular bereavements are brought about by the injustice and intrigue of man, true submission is not at a loss for consoling thoughts. The evil machinations of our enemies sometimes terminate in our benefit. Do they attack us by false reports? it may excite our caution against committing the things that are falsely alleged against us. Slander itself may be the means of rendering our characters in-

vulnerable before its poisoned arrows. And are we empoverished through the injustice of others? It may ultimately serve to lessen the number of our temptations, and lead us to appreciate a righteous life, and to view sin and all its devices with increased abhorrence and detestation. There is no situation amidst the losses of the world, in which the resigned soul does not regard the obligations of duty, or in which the amiableness of the Divine character does not engage the affections of the heart. It calmly and devoutly adopts the language of the prophet, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flocks shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stall; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

Public calamities frequently call for the exercise of resignation. The removal of good and great men is a grievous deprivation, that draws the sigh of sorrow from the bosom of patriotism, and requires her to sit in sackcloth and ashes. It is the same to a nation, as the loss of a wise and faithful parent to a numerous and depending offspring. Disposition and talents suited to the high spheres of official character are rarely found.

Many, who are eminently distinguished for their virtues and usefulness in the more private departments of action, might be bewil-

dered and lost in stations of great responsibility. Surrounded with dangers, and assailed by alarming events, some will be deserted by their wisdom, by their foresight, and their strength, and be resembled by the pilot who is benumbed by the storm, and whose voice is confounded in the tremors of utterance. There are others, who are led by violent zeal and unwarranted boldness. They rush into hazard and disaster as the horse rusheth into the battle. Thus when men, who are proved by experience to be good, by dangers to be great, and by triumph to be wise, are removed by death, the heart that is warmed with a spark of patriotic fire, must be deeply affected with grief. Resignation here points us to the great Ruler of the earth and skies; receives his visitations with humility and contrition, and cheerfully believes, that he can mould other portions of clay into vessels of equal honour, that he can bless at his pleasure, through the instrumentality of man, or by the direct and more immediate agency of his holy hand.

It is often alleged that there is no connection between religious faith and a righteous and salutary administration of government. This opinion, however, finds no warrant in the pages of sacred or profane history. When wicked and impious men are advanced into high and important stations, it may justly be considered a divine judgment upon pride and civil wickedness. The evils to be ap-

prehended, when the wicked bear rule, are of a shocking aspect. Are men promoted by the deluded confidence of others? That confidence becomes a medium through which the contagion of evil principles is conveyed into the hearts of others. Do they take the reins of government by violence? by violence they oppress the poor; by violence they trample on the rights of man; and by violence they scatter destruction as wide as the curtains of night, and as high as the howlings of the tempest. How can the heart be resigned to calamities of this description? With what pain must it discern monstrous and vain speculations adopted to the rejection of our holy religion; licentiousness and corruption bearing down before them every moral obligation and virtuous principle! It yields to the sustaining persuasion, that the Lord reigneth; that the tyranny, the pride and wrath of man have prescribed bounds, beyond which they can never pass: no, not even to break the limbs of an insect or to disturb the nest of a sparrow. Resignation calls from her celestial residence, "my children, enter into your chambers and shut the doors about you, and wait as it were a little while, until the indignation be past."

Drought is a calamity, to which we are greatly exposed. We depend upon the fruits of the earth, for the support of our frail bodies, for the enlargement of our treasures, and for the specious luxuries of life. This judgment,

therefore, alarms our feelings and extinguishes our hopes. Under its dreary empire nature is divested of her charms, and clothed in melancholy. The husbandman descends the field with a fainting heart. It languishes and mourns before him. His labours are given to the wind. The poor are driven to the gate of the miser, who exclaims, I have nothing to spare, in order to give plausibility to his extortion. The cries of want are echoed from vale to vale, mingled with tones of distress from the flock and the herd. In this state of things the pious heart struggles against the imperious demands of appetite, and submits to the will of Heaven. It remembers the oil and the flour, that supplied, without diminution the wants of the widow and the prophet. It considers, that a little received with thankfulness, is better than luxury without gratitude. It trusts in the mercy of the Lord, and learns righteousness from his judgments. It pleads for the smiles of Heaven to return again upon the fields, to cheer the drooping spirits of man; and forgets not to solicit the beams of that sun and the refreshing of that spirit, which call into being the plants of renown and make fruitful the vineyard of the Lord.

The feelings of humanity and the reconciliation of the saint are tried, in seasons of epidemic disease and mortal sickness. With what painful and timid steps, does sympathy patrol the gloomy city. The feeble glimmer-

ings of the lamp, where friendship holds her anxious vigils; the deep and solemn groans of the dying; the shrieks and sighs of surviving affection; the labours of the sexton, heard from the receptacle of the dead; the destroying angel, passing from door to door; houses of joy turned into cells of mourning; all these leave upon the heart, the deep impressions of wo. Resignation bows to the righteous sceptre of Heaven; bewails the mortality of man, and drops a tributary tear to the memory of Jesus. It transfers the soul to a better world, whose prospects alleviate temporal sorrows, and delight the eye of devout meditation.

The most pleasing hopes are often destroyed, by unexpected contingencies, and the most propitious prospects are cut off, and succeeded by painful and disheartening visions. Pleasures and blessings, that seem to be in our possession, elude our taste and mock our embraces. Disappointments of various kinds throng the path of mortal life. The evils which they inflict, are grievous to the righteous, and both grevious and dangerous to all who are unacquainted with gospel discipline and a submissive spirit. The heart of the youth glows with the fervours of exalted expectation. He portrays a picture of life. Its shades are few; its colours vivid and high. Time and experience, however, prove his fancy fallacious and the world a scene of painful vicissitude. His mind is soured; the corruptions of his heart arise against the divine government. The delightful mystery of

love; the soft effusions of its enthusiasm; the combined influence of hope and fear, of suspicion and assurance, with all that is dear in anticipation, may be turned into despair by a frown or the cruel voice of denial. Those, who are in this predicament, and are unacquainted with submission, frequently fall a sacrifice to disappointment. They either give themselves to penance and sorrow, or rush into the scenes of dissipation, where life and love vanish away. The ambitious are liable to disappointment; their schemes are defeated; their labor deranged; they become envious at the better success of others; they contract a morose and cynical disposition; and trample alike upon the good of society and the honor of Heaven. Disappointed and deceived in our friends; disappointed in the attainment and the quality of the objects after which we aspire, we need the aid of Heaven and the influence of resignation, in order to possess our souls in patience, our hearts in purity, and our consciences in peace.

A spirit of submission entirely changes the effects of disappointment on our hearts and life. Our early hopes are cut off, but this serves to restrain our extravagant calculations, correct our views, and regulate our judgment. The incompetent nature of earthly objects with regard to our happiness inclines us to seek enjoyment in the improvement of the mind, the exercises of the heart, and the services of our creator. Should all

our wishes be gratified, vain as we are, what multiplied miseries and accumulated wretchedness would surround us. Our greatest good frequently lies in a direction entirely opposite to our hopeful researches and sanguine prospects, and the greatest evils are lurking beneath the most enchanting appearances.—Disappointed in the objects of youthful affection; torn from the delusive dream of seraphic excellence in human form, our sorrow drives us into seclusion for a time. Being resigned, however, to the will of Heaven, the walks of solitude inspire reverence; the energies of the soul are recruited; we turn from mortal charms to the beauties of Zion, and pursue again our course, prepared to meet, with pious fortitude, the allotments of Providence. When the schemes of ambition fail; when our endeavors after riches, fame and secular greatness are rendered fruitless; our pride is humbled and we are brought to feel the useful impressions of our own weakness. Are we disappointed as to the quality and blissful influence of attained objects? the desires after glory and immortality are awakened in our bosoms. Looking back upon life, many disappointments are known to have resulted in our benefit, and there are none whose places might have been filled with success, without exciting a suspicion that the present hour might have been loaded with greater wretchedness, than we now experience. Had the mariner the command of the winds; had he

constant and cloudless prospects of sun and stars, indolence and sloth would soon scatter their fatal dust upon his head, while the sons of resignation, who are tossed by the storm, driven from their course, experiencing the vicissitudes of light and darkness, safety and danger, would arrive at their haven in health and vigour, and alive with the raptures of praise.

Persecution is of ancient origin. From the death of Abel to modern times, it has laboured in scenes of martyrdom, rioting on the cries of righteous blood. Its empire is described in history, and its terrors are delineated in the political and religious declamations of the present day, followed with ascriptions of praise, that its terrible triumphs are ended. Alas! this is but a dream concerning what we wish might come to pass. Persecution still remains the same in design, and the same in malignity. It has merely altered its mode of ravage and its destructive weapons. It has exchanged the club for ridicule, the spear for sophistry, and the furnace for slander. It now spares the body and destroys the consolations of the heart; it cries peace to the passenger, but severs the anchor of the soul. It does no violence to chastity, but destroys her sacred asylum and her only delightful residence.—Ridicule is a powerful weapon, in a warfare against the children of light. The natural man can bear with better fortitude the chains of a prison than the sidelook sneer of enmity

and the mocking finger of scorn. Young and timid piety is greatly disconcerted and perplexed by the power of ridicule. Those of greater strength of mind and faith, are often as much confused by pointed laughter, as though they had received a warrant from the inquisition. The prayers of the righteous are held in derision; their faith and hopes are denominated the mere rhapsodies of imagination. Under these trials, resignation furnishes the soul with an opportunity to fortify itself. It leads to a judicious selection of companions, and heightens the relish for the interviews of congenial souls. Satire is a weapon that is employed by persecution, and is more dangerous and harder to resist than vulgar ridicule. It discourages serious inquiry, and vexes the household of faith; it poisons its arrows in the abuses of religion, and directs them to the bosom of christianity. By the voice of satire we are called upon to exhibit the ensigns of distinction, wrought by grace, to favour the world with a view of our white raiments and unspotted hands. When overtaken by calamity, we are invited to awake our humble Nazarene, that he may help in time of trouble. By resigning ourselves to the Divine will, we are enabled to suppress a spirit of retaliation, to maintain a tranquility of mind, that is always necessary to our defence. We patiently endure these trials, and our ambition is awakened to furnish less occasion for sarcastic remarks, and to possess the spirit of

him who endured the cross and despised the shame, for the glory that was set before him.

Slander is employed, in effectuating the schemes of modern persecution. The most promising germs of genius are blasted by its breath; the garments of praise are aspersed by its venom, and the visage of the pure in heart is snared by its fiery darts. Without the tranquil fortitude, which resignation inspires, their slanderous attacks irritate our passions, corrode our hearts and render us incapable of attending, with propriety to the duties of life. Thus our progress in sacred science, is impeded; piety is driven into seclusion, and religion trembles in lifting her head before a persecuting world. Resignation conducts us to a refuge where the Redeemer delights to appear, and endue us with the armour of God, and enable us to triumph over persecution, and to resist the ridicule, the satire, slander, sophistry and violence that are exerted against christianity and the souls of its humble votaries. Oh! persecution! although thy labours be unwearied, and thy schemes dark and mischievous, it is possible to pass through thy bloody gates to everlasting glory. It is possible for the meek and humble objects of thy vengeance to be clothed in robes, that are washed in the blood of the lamb, while thou art irrevocably doomed to chains of darkness and despair.

Our contemplations upon old age are infused with melancholy, reverence and dread.

In advanced life, the energies of the body are enfeebled; the exhilarating hopes of the world are faint, the senses are impaired, and the relish for pleasure lost in languor. The active scenes of life invite the approach and participation of the aged in vain. The rigid law of infirmity, gradually diminishes their sphere of action and reduces it to a circle of small dimensions in domestic retirement. It is impossible to suppress a fear, that they have seen for the last time, the bloom of the field, and that the vintage and the harvest will be repeated no more before their eyes. The young and the unthankful watch, like spies, for that hour, when the inheritance will be theirs. These circumstances mingle a melancholy with our thoughts upon age. It is a command of Heaven, "thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the aged." In viewing those whose life is greatly prolonged, we feel the impressions of preserving goodness, associating with them the sentiments of immortality: on the silvered brow and furrowed feature, we may read, *this is not your rest.* Having their knowledge purged by experience from the errors of youthful speculation, they are enabled to counsel their followers, and to point out before them, the dangers and delusions of the way. Separated from eternity, by the journey of an hour, their looks, their language and waiting attitude, suggest sublime and solemn thoughts, and make us exclaim, who had not rather be

Jacob leaning on his staff, than Jacob toiling in the field for Laban?

The evils of old age are incurable; they will terminate only in the grave. The few who arrive to length of days, must endure the pains of beholding their grace and comeliness converted into decripitude and infirmity.—They call for the companions of early life, but they are gone, to return no more. They are neglected by the gay and active; they are suspicious that they shall weary out, by their helplessness, the patience of their friends.—They are rapidly descending the declivity of life; the clarion of praise ceases to salute their ears; and they gradually become more unknowing and unknown. These are thoughts that excite a dread in our bosoms, to become old, impaired and helpless. In order to render old age supportable, and to ameliorate its condition, we must possess and cherish a submissive spirit. Formed for action and appointed to toil by the destinies of Heaven, employment becomes almost essential to life. By the stern control of age, we are driven from business and are scarcely allowed to be spectators to the occupations of the world. Delightful to the husbandman are the vicissitudes of home and absence, of labour and rest. With what pleasure does he return from the culture of the field, or from his journeys? He meets at his door the smiles of a companion, and informs her of the adventures and success of the day. Old age terminates these agreeable

changes, and stamps his condition with a tedious sameness. Resignation here pours its composing influence upon his soul, and prevents the poison of regret from reaching the heart.

The statesman appropriates his time and talents to the public good. He devises salutary laws and inculcates obedience. He investigates, with unwearied anxiety, the evils of government, and labours to remove them. He guards against destructive innovations, civil inquietude and foreign dangers. When he is old and grey headed, he must retire from these scenes through the portals of resignation. Then will he participate the rewards of fidelity, and be attended by celestial light in the evening of life, till he arrives at his grave.

The aged are deprived of many pleasures and fashionable entertainments, which the young participate with unbounded avidity.—This privation exposes their hearts to the tormenting influence of envy, while they remain destitute of reconciliation. They behold the world partaking of the gifts and bounties of Providence; they are led by an envious disposition to condemn these good things, and to criminate those who are allowed to enjoy them. Hence arises that illiberal and morose style of behaviour, which too often characterizes advanced age, and excites in us an aversion from its company. The endless variations of manners, under the busy empire of

fashion; the changes that are daily produced in the features of society, are considered as mischievous innovations, portending inevitable ruin. Peevishness discolours the things and events around them. They forget that the world is the work of God, that its concerns are under his inspection and righteous control. Thus, the decline of life is dark and dreary to the children of irreconciliation.

The aged are exposed to constant dissatisfaction and restlessness, which are tedious as pain. They impatiently pass from one season to another, wishing, if possible, to hurry the wheels of time. In the morning they long for the watches of the night; and when the night arrives, they long for the return of the morning. A spirit of irreligious inquietude sharpens their distress, and aggravates this part of their burden. The consolations of the heart are all destroyed, in opposing the councils of the Almighty; and every ray of sustaining hope is extinguished, in resisting his will.

The sensations of present enjoyment, are heightened and endeared by memory and reflection. These powers may furnish the mind with an assemblage of delightful images, drawn from the scenes and events that are past. The aged peasant, during the inclemency of the summer, will seat himself beneath the shade of the majestic elm, and to evade the heat of the day, to bathe in the cooling breeze, and to muse on the times that are gone.

He will address us in the following manner: "I am now bowing under the weight of years and infirmity. When I selected this spot for my residence, it was a dreary wilderness. I spared the tree under which I am now seated, when its size was less than the staff which I hold in my hand. These fields were called from the forest, by the sweat of my brow. I have been blessed with a family, many of whom are now sleeping in the dust. I have been blessed and afflicted, but through the spirit of grace this precious promise has been applied to my soul;" "All things shall work together for the good of them that love God." He will also narrate the distinguishing achievements and hazardous adventures of early life. He will show us the wounds he has received in battle; but refer us to the greater glory of being a faithful soldier under the great captain of our salvation.

Reading is a source of comfort, secured by resignation, to the aged. Many precious hours are rescued from listlessness and tedious languor by attention to books. In this employment, they discern with delight, the similarity between their own sentiments and the sentiments of those who have signalized themselves in the paths of virtue, and have gone to rest. Reading revives those ideas which once enlightened and entertained their minds, and as the visit of friends with whom we were familiar, is rendered the more delicious from the circumstance of long absence, so their

ideas and conceptions return upon them with enhanced delight. To retrieve a single tho't from forgetfulness is like finding and recognizing some valuable article which had been lost for years, and concerning which we had forgotten, that it ever was our own. This employment fortifies them against the disheartening effects of infirmity. When their strength fails, they are enabled to adopt this language, when we are weak, then are we strong.

The objects of devout meditation are not diminished by time and age. Heaven is as wide, when we behold it from the brink of the grave, as when we descry it from the threshold of active life. Those temporal objects, that are worthy of our thoughts, may all be summoned to appear before us, when our days are nearly numbered. From the wide field of meditations, the aged receive many sustaining and useful consolations.—By these sublime employments are prepared for the scenes of a future world. Their resignation, by its composing and tranquil influence, enables them to enjoy their God, while the tabernacles of clay are gradually bowing to mingle with their kindred dust.

By the pious exercises of resignation the aged are delivered from a peevish and querulous disposition against men and things.—Their appearance and conversation command our respectful and affectionate regard. Their gravity is meliorated by cheerfulness; their

actions are expressive of benevolence, and we listen to their counsels and desire entertainment and instruction from their society. Surrounded with the unwearied vigils of friendship and affection; attended by the smiles of heaven, they cheerfully and patiently wait for the manifestation of the sons of God.

But few of the human race are so delighted with the present style of existence, that they would wish it unalterably prolonged to endless duration. The dissatisfying nature of all temporal things, our restlessness under the cumberous shackles of clay, cause us to aspire after a style of being, that is more perfect and blissful. We fondly indulge the hopes of a glorious immortality, till we arrive to the very boundaries of time, whence we all descend with reluctance into the valley of death. We tremble at the thought of the silent grave, and even piety and faith linger on its brink, that they may pour out their prayers to God, perform a few more duties and receive some additional illuminations of assuring grace. How dreadful must death appear to those who possess a spirit of irreconciliation! In vain may they invoke their philosophy; in vain may they call upon the boasted virtues. The world and all its objects can be of no more value to them, than the phantom that floats in the air. The body must be dissolved, and they know not in what forms they shall appear hereafter. The features of the Eternal are soon to be revealed before them and the awful majesty of a righteous tribunal, where the soul must re-

ceive sentence according to the deeds of mortal life. Far different are the feelings and exercises of the resigned, in approaching their great change. They are inspired with a triumphant fortitude, through the manifestation of the Divine presence.

Of the powers of the soul and the functions of the heart, natural affection is one that is least corrupted, enfeebled and perverted by depravity. It appears among the earliest emotions of the heart, maintains its agency through the cares and ills of time. It outlives the energies of the understanding; it is often wakeful and active, when the passions are extinguished by disease and age; and its flame is felt in the bosom, till the last spark of life expire. With what imbittered agony must the irreconciled parent leave his tender offspring, and go down to the mansions of the dead? This distress is removed from the subjects of reconciliation. Confiding in the goodness and mercy of God, they cheerfully commit the charge of the cradle to his guardian angels, and intrust to his providential care their surviving relatives; rejoicing that he best knows how to mingle the cup of life with joy and grief, that he can bring them, at his holy pleasure, into a pure and undefiled inheritance, where kindred souls shall meet to be separated no more.

Dreadful to the wicked are the ravages of the grave on the body; forbidding is the land of forgetfulness; and intolerable is the apprehension of retaining for ever a remorseful con-

sciousness. From these terrors, the humble and submissive are exempted. They are favoured with strength of thought, sufficient to detach sensation from the grave; they are persuaded that the soul may smile unmolested in glory, while the body is mouldering in the receptacle of the dead. They rejoice in the hopes of a resurrection, and concerning the entertainments of another world they are not perplexed. In the visions of faith, they discover inexhaustible sources of joy, and rivers of pleasure that flow for ever at the right hand of God. They receive the pangs of dissolution without dismay, and through the blood of the lamb, they obtain a glorious triumph over the king of terrors. Being reconciled to the Divine will and prepared by his grace for an exchange of worlds, the desires of temporal existence retire from the heart, and leave an unmolested residence to the delightful sentiments of immortal life. In the present state they are attended by a variety of evils and encumbering cares. Polluted thoughts and vain imaginations intrude upon their solemn scenes, and tarnish their purest devotions. Their love is often languid; their faith beshrouded with doubts; and their hopes mingled with a bewildering anxiety. They are convinced that corruption, depravity and sin can never follow them beyond the gates of death. There the soul shall be released and admitted into the pure and delightful service of God and the Lamb.

CHAPTER IV.

A SERIOUS QUESTION CONCERNING RESIGNATION, EXAMINED.

THE requisitions of the gospel are founded in wisdom, and are agreeable to the nature and fitness of things. Their limits are prescribed, and made to correspond with the measure and extent of the powers we possess, and with certain principles of action and affections suitable for rational and accountable beings. Hence all attempts to outdo divine requirements, are hazardous and presumptive. They expose us to be justly denominated "over-much righteous, and wise above what is written." All ages, however, have produced instances of supererogation. Often is the law of self-denial extended to abstinences dishonorable and injurious. Penance is heard to groan from her gloomy cell, refusing to smile in presence of celestial benignity, or receive with gratitude the rich munificence of divine bounty. Charity is sometimes found extending herself to extravagance; violating the principles of self-preservation, and procuring by its excess an inability to perform the benevolent duties of life. Cases of this practical extravagance are more rare, than those of extravagance in doctrinal speculation. There is a prevailing propensity in our nature to enter the fields of supposition in quest of evidence, to illustrate the qualities of the heart,

and the disposition of the soul. We frequently hear men declaring that they would give the world to alleviate the distresses of a fellow mortal; that they would become a sacrifice for the good of their country; that they would be exiled for ever from the bosom of their God, could it procure for others an everlasting residence in the light of his countenance. We are now to inquire whether resignation imply a willingness to receive the sentence of condemnation in any possible case?

Religion is designed to promote and secure our happiness; to purify and enhance our enjoyments. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and her paths peace. A practical regard to her sublime doctrines, obedience to her holy dictates and righteous precepts ennoble the soul, and furnish it with constant and delightful entertainment. A performance of the duties we owe to ourselves, our neighbour and our God; the religious exercises of the heart, and the enlightened energies of the understanding, pour a blissful influence on life. Repentance is justly denominated a work of imbittered anguish. The soul surveys the sins of life, feels the compunctions of guilt, and is overwhelmed with sorrow. Still, however, this dark and painful exercise, is connected with consequent light and joy. It opens the only avenues, through which the promises of mercy are to be received. It leads us into the possession of precious and sustaining hopes, under whose influence we should refuse to ex-

change the tear of contrition for an ocean of sensual delight. We are also required to suppress and govern our passions, and to eradicate the unhallowed desires of the heart. But in this employment we are by no means destitute of agreeable sensations. We return from the conquest of an evil passion, bearing those laurels of victory, which transcend the richest emblems of martial glory. A glowing satisfaction pervades our bosoms, whenever we resist with success the attacks of temptation, or evade the dangerous allurements of the world. Self-denial too is a work of the spirit, through which the deeds of the flesh are mortified, and is always attended with arduous conflicts. It secures, however, the benediction of conscience, and furnishes matter for delightful reflection. Thus every branch of religious duty, every gracious exercise of a new and divine life, is accompanied by invaluable consolations, which increase in proportion to the purity of the motives by which we are actuated, and in proportion to the style and character of our exercises.

But, if resignation imply a willingness to receive the irrevocable sentence of condemnation, it must of necessity be stripped of its consolatory and sustaining effects. For so long as we are susceptible of pain or joy, the thought of banishment from the presence of God must be distressing. How can the soul endure the awful apprehension without being overwhelmed with anguish and terror? If it

be willing to be rejected, it must apprehend the moral possibility of being a child of God, and converted thence into a child of wrath and disobedience; otherwise this pretended willingness is but an empty sound. It would be of the same amount with a proclamation from our lips that we would willingly walk in darkness, should the sun be extinguished from the firmament. Does resignation therefore imply such a willingness? it must militate with the doctrine of perseverance; since it supposes it possible for souls that are purchased by the blood of the Lamb, to be separated for ever from the love of God. The consideration must be painful to the heart of the believer. But resignation harmonizes with all the doctrines of the gospel. It is an exercise that alleviates our burthens, heightens our joys and illuminates our hopes. It never leads its subjects into the trackless field of supposition and conjecture. Nor does it imply a willingness to receive eternal condemnation; since the sacred scriptures no where intimate that we are to taste of the heavenly gift with lips of such purity, that we are willing to exchange it for the cup of eternal wrath.

Does resignation require a willingness to meet the wrath of God in any practicable or possible instance? it destroys at once the love of life. This principle is implanted in our bosoms by the hand of our Creator, and is indispensably necessary to our natural and moral condition. It prompts us to provide for our

frail bodies, to avoid the evils by which we are surrounded, and to enliven and protract the powers and energies of the soul. As this principle is corrupted and enfeebled, the motives of religion are rendered fruitless; our agency is controlled by the cravings of appetite and the instinctive attempts to avoid pain. Are the delightful sentiments of existence extinguished, suicide, strangling and death become the choice of mankind. They feel no reluctance in snatching from the king of terrors the cup of dissolution, and bearing it to their own lips. In vain are the votaries of intemperance exhorted to relinquish their self destroying habits. The love of being is overwhelmed with lust. They hurry the shadow around the dial of time, and dread but little its arrival at that point, where a life, to which they have no attachment, must terminate.—If we can awake from slumber their love of life, persuasion becomes a hopeful labor, and we find them returning by the path of reformation to that being, from whom they have revolted. Religion cherishes and preserves from dereliction the love of life, and consecrates to immortality the charm of existence. Upon this ground alone are we truly susceptible of divine goodness in calling us into being, endowing us with rational powers, and preserving our consciousness from oblivion. The threatenings of the holy Divinity are addressed through the fears of the heart to the love of being. "In the day, that thou eatest

"thereof, thou shalt surely die." "This day "I set before you life and death." But what penalty would there be in the denunciations of death, if all the delectable feelings of existence were destroyed? The rewards also, which our religion graciously promises, address the love of life. "Come ye to the wa-"ters of life." "And it shall be unto him a "well of water, springing up unto everlast-"ing life." "Be thou faithful unto death, "and I will give unto thee a crown of life." Were we in any case or by any means to lose the pleasure of existence, these promises would become but feeble incitements to duty. Their influence upon our characters and upon our souls would scarcely be an object of discernment.

If it be asserted that "our willingness to meet the wrath of God does not destroy the "love of life;" we demand an example, in which the subject of condemnation has retained the love of being, after the hopes of enjoyment were entirely extinguished. Were it possible for the christian to be banished from the bosom of the Redeemer, with all his boasted willingness, his voice would mingle with the cries of the multitude, who "shall "call upon the rocks and the mountains to "fall upon them." This consequence, however, is evaded by the opinion, that the christian's willingness to become a subject of wrath is an evidence, that his name is engraven on the palms of God's hands and insepa-

rably united with Christ. If so, why is it said that we must be willing to be damned rather, than to be converted into flying serpents, or green-eyed reptiles? For the evidence is as strong in favor of this change, as it is that the saint shall ever be turned into an object of divine vengeance. Upon this principle, therefore, alone can it be argued that the love of life is not destroyed, viz. that this extraordinary exercise of resignation is without end or object; since the redeemed soul will never be doomed to furnish an actual proof, that she is willing to go away into everlasting torment.

In surveying the exercises of our hearts both in a convicted and in a converted state, we find no evidence in favor of the doctrine which the affirmative espouses. We are awakened to serious thoughts by the power of the divine word, or by the alarming voice of some afflictive dispensation. Our guilt and depravity appear in terrific forms before us.—The awful and momentous scenes of eternity, the apprehensions of being doomed to condign and hopeless punishment fill our souls with dread and dismay. Afraid to die and afraid to be dead, we at length experience a renovation of heart and spirit; the chains of condemnation are broken, the hopes of Heaven are kindled in our hearts. We feel the pure enrapturing effusions of divine love, and the pleasing testimony of the Spirit that our names are written in the book of life. In this

emancipated and glorious situation is it a gospel requirement, that we must be willing to turn our eyes from the charms of Heaven, and go back into the chains of darkness, and receive an irrevocable sentence from the offended Divinity? We recoil from the thought, we dread a separation from the bosom of our beloved Redeemer. Does God withdraw the light of his countenance? we are distressed, we mourn, we pray for the return of his favor and loving kindness. It is possible to acquiesce under a temporal withdrawment of the holy spirit, for remaining grace may be sufficient for this purpose. Yet how can we assert that we are, or should be, willing to be condemned, when every subject of condemnation must of necessity be destitute of that grace, without which we are incapable of the least exercise of resignation? What can be more inconsistent, than the opinion that we should be resigned as christians, and at the same time be children of wrath? For none but the children of wrath are subjects of condemnation. And does God require an exercise, to which there is no corresponding object? If the christian be willing to have his name blotted from the book of life, it is well known that such an event can never take place. The exercise therefore is but an empty shadow. Acquiescence and resignation imply an existing judgment, or some known purpose and counsel of God. Are we thus resigned to condemnation? it supposes an indubitable certainty that the

dreadful doom awaits us; otherwise we are only treading the path of conjecture and unwarrantable supposition. Our submission to events without a discernment of that controling Providence, by which they are bro't about, constitutes no part of evangelical resignation. A fellow mortal is providentially doomed to descend from the splendor of secular greatness, and to assume a begging attitude at the feet of his former servants. He may submit with philosophic firmness to the gloomy scenes of adversity; yet, if he have no conceptions of the divine will, his submission is no more than a feat of human fortitude, or unavoidable compliance with the destinies of blind fatality. Acquiescence under bereavement, while the holy agency of God is unnoticed and forgotten, can never deserve to be denominated an exercise of pious reconciliation. If we are not alive to the impressions of the divine will, both in its restraining and constraining influence; and if the glory of God have not the highest rank among the motives by which we are actuated; in vain, as it respects our future felicity, do we cultivate an expansive benevolence; in vain do we cherish a tender and officious charity, and in vain do we punctiliously discharge the obligations of moral virtue. The will of God is made plainly visible with regard to the exercises and duties of a holy life. It is announced by every trial and calamity, by which we are overtaken. For, knowing that the very hairs of our

head are all numbered by him, we must also be sensible of the overruling counsels of his will. On this ground patience, long suffering, acquiescence, and resignation, become the distinguishing graces of a renewed life.—But whence are we to know that it is the will of God, that any christian will ever receive sentence of condemnation, or that he must be willing to meet that dreadful destiny? In what alcove of celestial records has he deposited such counsel and purpose? On what mountain of Zion has he made proclamation, that some of the trophies of the Redeemer's blood must be banished for ever from his presence; and that all, who are purchased at so great a price, and whose knowledge of Christ is life eternal, must be willing to meet the event? Hath it not been declared, that the will of God determines the perseverance of the saint? "My sheep hear my voice.—I know them and they follow me; and give "unto them eternal life, and they shallnev-"er perish." Hence it is undeniable, that the christian's willingness to receive sentence of condemnation has no agreement with the divine will. It will not facilitate an escape from this difficulty to say we are willing on supposition, it should be God's will and for his glory. This amounts to no more, than a conjecture of what we should do presumptuously supposing a case that implies mutability of the divine purpose. And it is no more an exercise of resignation, than Peter's peremtory avowal of unabating attachment to the

Redeemer was an actual adherence to him, when accosted by the damsel. The exercise is less than a dream. For, do we dream of conquests, of rearing cities, and of swaying the sceptre of empire; the actual realization of these things is possible. Whereas by asserting that we are resigned to condemnation, if it should be the will of Heaven, an impossibility stares us in the face. For every subject of condemnation must be as incapable of pious resignation, as Satan is incapable of the hallowed fervors of love.

The affirmative of this question often assumes another position, which involves equal difficulty and absurdity. In order to find a criterion by which we may judge of the state of others, the advocates of the doctrine enquire whether we are willing to be condemned, if it should be the means of procuring for others an entrance into the courts of glory? This enquiry supposes a possibility, that man may become the saviour of man; or at least by a voluntary reception of the sentence of death become the means of saving some, who would otherwise be lost for ever. Whereas all the blood of martyrdom could not atone for a single sin; and, were all the armies above to become a sacrifice, it would be insufficient for the redemption of the least polluted child of apostacy. There is no other name, than that of Christ, given under Heaven among men, whereby they can be saved. We have never been informed of a soul, that

was saved through the condemnation of any subject of wrath. Do we say we are willing to endure eternal suffering for the salvation of others; we suppose an impossible case of which no divine intimation has ever been given. We intrude upon the ground of presumption, where we are exposed to self delusion and deception. Were an ambassador to be sent from God to the dying bed of the saint with information, that a number of perishing souls could be saved in consequence of his condemnation, and of his hatred and rebellion against the Almighty; then, nor till then, would it be proper to ask the question, "Are "you willing to receive sentence of death, to "have your pleasing hopes extinguished, the "desire of life converted into a prayer for "oblivion and the love of God in the heart "converted into satanic malice?" What substance is there in being willing to suffer on condition that impossibilities become possible, and inconsistencies consistent? The doctrine, against which we contend, derives its ostensible support from the declaration of the apostle, that he could wish himself accursed for his brethren. In the first place he does not say that he actually wishes himself under this doom; but simply declares an opinion, that he could willingly endure it for his brethren. Now does the word *accursed* ever imply the actual infliction of the irrevocable sentence of death? It is generally used to signify excommunication, the endurance

of divine displeasure, and judicial suffering; but does not imply endless duration. The apostle therefore undoubtedly, under a vehement desire for the salvation of his brethren, meant to express his willingness to suffer the most poignant anguish, the grievous trials and judgments of life; could he thereby be a mean in the hand of God of bringing others to the bosom of Christ. This corresponds with that spirit, under which he exclaimed "my heart's desire and prayer to God for "Israel is, that they might all be saved. I "rejoice in tribulations; for tribulation work-"eth patience, and patience experience, and "experience hope, and hope maketh not a-"shamed." The power and goodness of God are conspicuously displayed in changing the human heart, eradicating its native pride, purging away its corruptions, and supplanting its predilection for sin by a triumphant love of holiness. This glorious work of omnipotence creates a distinction that will continue undefaced, when time and its objects have all expired. This attachment to holiness is not founded upon mutable principles; nor is it to be exchanged for listless indifference or scornful aversion. It sits in triumph amidst the horrors of persecution. It is raised to purer flames by the attacks of wickedness. The darkness of a prison, the gloom of solitude, the chains of slavery, can never procure its extinction. Our affection for holiness is among the richest gems of christian

excellence, and gives to existence an unfading charm. Delightful is the assembly of the saints, who pray, and praise and pour out their hearts in the pure effusions of devotion before their God. The scene commands our unreserved attention. It excites our feelings. It makes them partake of sanctity and the sublime solemnity of reverence. Holiness becomes the house of God for ever; and the more we discover of its immaculate features, the richer are our joys and entertainments. We view with peculiar satisfaction those aged christians, who have long walked with God, and in holiness of life at the right hand of Christ. We derive more pleasure from one devout expression, from one hallowed deed performed under divine illumination, than theatrical exhibition and courtly parade are able to bestow. We are enamoured with the emanations of Divinity, wherever they are discovered in mortal life. We are charmed with the biography of our ancestors; we recollect the attitude, in which we have seen them morning and evening praising their holy benefactor. The richest revenue of worldly joy is but penury in comparison with the joy we feel, while ascending, with solemn steps, the mount of Olives, whispering as we ascend, "our fathers worshipped in this "mountain." Every holy exercise of our own hearts is accompanied with celestial joy. How many days are rescued from wretchedness by the propitious visit of a few holy and

divine thoughts! They are like those rare but cooling streams, which support and cheer the traveller as he passes the desert. Do we turn our eyes to Heaven, its holy mansions engage our affections. The pure and undefiled in presence of the Redeemer, whose holiness gives an infinite loveliness to his character, kindle in our bosoms that sacred love of holiness which is essential to the believer's life. Now according to the affirmative of the question the christian must be willing to have his relish for holy things destroyed, and the pleasures, that he derives from the hallowed scenes of contemplation, removed for ever from his participation. If he be willing to be condemned; he is also willing to strip off his whitened raiment, to be clothed with the chains of depravity and death. He must be willing to trample beneath his feet the image of God, and assume the likeness of satan. In short he must be willing to hate and despise every object of celestial complexion, and to say unto corruption, 'thou art my father, and to the burning but never dying worm, thou art my mother and my sister.' But where is the christian, who does not recoil from the tho't of losing the stamp of divinity, which was reimpressed upon him in that glorious moment when he was born from above, and created by God in righteousness and holiness? For were it required that we should be willing to be condemned, we must be willing to pos-

sess all the infernal qualities with which the subjects of condemnation are clothed.

A willingness in any case to be condemned is inconsistent with the christian's hatred to sin. The abhorrence and hatred of iniquity are felt with the first glow of divine love in our bosoms. We look upon sin with absolute detestation, as being the poison of life, the plague of the heart and heinous in the sight of God. We discover its odious features in ourselves. It involves us in the terrors of guilt. It diffuses its pollutions over our solemn and most serious scenes. It wraps in darkness many of the days of our life, and mingles our hopes with fear and doubt. It procures lamentation and sorrow to our souls by removing us from the light of the divine countenance; and above all, it dishonors and offends the glorious majesty of Heaven. When we discover it in others, it there appears in undisguised and odious colours. No length of time can meliorate its visage. It gathers horror from antiquity, heinousness from the present, and indignation and judgment from futurity. We hate its labors; for they are labors of rebellion and darkness. We hate its effects; for they are indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish. Notwithstanding all this, if we must be willing to be condemned, we must feel no reluctance in becoming ripened for such an event. With what propriety could the christian be asked, 'Are you 'willing if it should be for the divine glory,

'to thrust from your lips the cup of holy joy, 'and drink iniquity like water? Are you wil- 'ling to hate, to blaspheme, and to despise 'the God you have loved? Are you willing 'to renounce the works of righteousness, and 'carry on an inveterate rebellion against your 'God? Are you willing to unite with the 'powers of darkness, and crucify that Re- 'deemer on whose bosom you have delight- 'fully reclined; whose smiles you have de- 'nominated a Heaven indeed!' All these questions are comprised in this; are you willing to be condemned for ever? For, if this be answered in the affirmative, we announce at the same time a willingness to hate the Almighty, to despise his counsels, and to love and practise the sins and abominations, which we have above enumerated, till our souls be prepared to drink with perfection the vials of wrath.

The affirmative of the question is palpably inconsistent with the nature and form of the covenant of grace. On the part of the Divinity he engages to be our God, necessarily implying by such engagement immutability of purpose. Believers on their part unconditionally engage, that through his quickening and sustaining grace, they will be his obedient children. But if resignation require, as an holy exercise, a willingness to be condemned; our covenant must agree with this doctrine. Then will it consist in something like the following form: 'Heavenly Father, we engage

'to honour thee so long as it shall be thy will 'and for thy glory. But should thy will re-'quire it, we are willing to receive the sentence 'of death, and to asperse thy name. We en-'gage obedience to thy laws so long as it shall 'be thy will; but when thy glory makes the 'demand, we will no longer desire a know-'ledge of thy ways. We will breathe our 'venom upon the cause of religion, and upon 'the cross of Christ.' For it amounts to all this, when we say that we are willing to be condemned. But does the covenant of grace ever imply a possibility, that we should be required to be piously willing to seek the honor and glory of God in any other path, than that which leads to the gates of heaven? God, in order to manifest the immutability of this counsel and covenant, hath sworn by two immutable things. Why then will the christian dare to affirm, what he would do, when an actual call to that purpose must make the Divinity mutable? It is morally impossible to be piously resigned to condemnation. Actual resignation can never precede the consciousness of being. Are we informed that in some future time there will be a call for us to exercise charity upon an object, which will then exist; we purpose to comply with this call, when the existence of the object and other circumstances shall render it practicable. But this previous purpose is by no means an actual deed of charity. The sinner may say that he is willing previous to his death

to repent; yet this assertion is far from being an exercise of repentance. With what propriety can we proclaim, that we bear with fortitude a burden that never has been imposed upon us; or that we patiently endure a chastisement, which never has been inflicted? The very form, in which the affirmative of the question is constructed proves the impossibility of the exercise which we deny. 'I am willing to be condemned, if 'it should be God's will.' The condition, here inserted, proves the present non-existence of the exercise. If the doctrine of christian perseverance be true, it is morally impossible, that he should acquiesce under and be resigned to condemnation; for such an event can never overtake him. To what then is he resigned, and where is the end and object of such resignation? He is resigned to just nothing. Thus it is evident that the doctrine is visionary, resting entirely upon supposition and conjecture.

The idea of entire submission and unreserved resignation, is thought by some to countenance and support the affirmative of the question. Unreserved resignation requires us to renounce and dissolve an unbecoming attachment to all the objects of time and sense.—By a variety of motives, consisting in selfishness, in pride, in the desire of honour, and the propensities to present security, we may be induced to reject from our intercourse many forbidden things, reserving to ourselves a fa-

vourite number, upon which to lavish the whole energies of the heart. Should we reduce all our idol gods to a single image, we are still at an infinite distance from genuine worship; for this remaining image may entirely command the powers and exercises of the soul. The work of renunciation then must be thorough and unreserved. Should we preserve our favourite passion unrestrained, or one lust unmortified, we thereby preserve a source of pollution, sufficient to overwhelm and extinguish every spark of divine love, and every pious principle of the heart. We are required to make an entire surrender of all our sensual pleasures; but does this prove that we must be willing to be condemned? It is our indispensable duty to submit to the divine will in all the works of obedience. The outward observance of apart of his laws and statutes would not distingush us from the unbelieving world. Our obedience must be punctual and thorough; though it require the extinction of pride and the abandonment of a thousand alluring joys. Does this prove that we must be willing to receive sentence of condemnation? Unreserved resignation requires us to acquiesce under all the dispensations of Divine Providence, and to tread with willing steps that path of tribulation and sorrow, into which we may be called by the wise counsellor above, who knows all the proportions of light and darkness, of pain and joy, and of hope and

fear, that are necessary to bring us to the gates of glory. According to the gospel requisitions we are bound to submit ourselves into the hands of God, to overrule our life and the concernments of the soul according to the dictates of his holy will and pleasure. This surrender is made by the christian under the cheering illumination of faith, and the consolatory influences of a well-grounded hope. With unmurmuring fortitude we submit to the trials and sufferings, which are brought upon us. Yet we have no exercise in this, which in the least resembles a willingness to endure the wrath of God for ever.—Like Moses we choose rather to suffer with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. We run with patience the christian race that is set before us; looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, and despised the shame.—The exercises of unreserved resignation are always subjoined with this petition to the sovereign controller of all events; do thou more and better for us, than we are able to ask or think. And it would be more in conformity with the deepest depravity, than with the divine pleasure, should our resignation include a willingness to become the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction. It is a lamentable circumstance, that the entire submission is so much wanting among many, who entertain the pleasing hopes of Heaven. It also deserves

a tear, that any should think that by unreserved reconciliation, they must be willing to become irreconciled, and wander in hopeless exile from the love of God. Slumbering on the lap of carnal security, the apostate world have no conception of the nature and character of the divine law. The immutable basis, on which it is founded, its righteous and unyielding demands, and the holiness of its principles, are all wrapped in darkness before their eyes. Do they believe there is something, which bears the name of divine law? they are not alarmed by any apprehension of its dreadful execution upon them; but entertain a delusive hope, that a few days devoted to the works of obedience in any future and convenient season, will be fully and sufficient to secure the privileges and benefits of the sons of God. It is a peculiar effect of renewing and quickening grace to reveal the divine law, and enlighten the mind with just views of its character. It now appears in its amazing height, and depth, and length, and breadth, infinitely holy, and essentially equitable. This view of the divine law is always accompanied with lively conceptions of our sins and transgressions. We discover their heinousness and turpitude, and are persuaded that no mortal can be justified by the deeds of the law. There is sufficient defect and impurity in our most exalted virtues, and in our most hallowed services, to extinguish for ever the hopes of salvation upon the ground of perfect obedi-

ence, which the law demands. "Without the law," said the apostle, "I was alive once; but, when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." Under a knowledge of the divine law, and the consciousness of his great guilt, every true believer is constrained to acknowledge, that he has no claim to the divine favor, and that it would be just in God, should he cut him off, and make him as miserable, as he has made himself sinful; and he will ever gaze with pious wonder upon that triumphant mercy of which he is the spared and living monument. But our feeling that it would be just in God to consign us our portion in the chambers of death and despair, furnishes no kind of proof that we are, or possibly can be, willing to endure eternal suffering. In the confession of our guilt we acknowledge that the throne of God would be for ever spotless, had we been doomed to the wretchedness we deserve.—Yet by this it is never implied that we are willing to receive sentence of condemnation, any more than to drink of the cup of oblivion, or to rebel against the commandment of God, and become converted into pillars of salt. The convicted criminal may realize and acknowledge the equity of the law by which he is condemned. He may be convinced, that he justly deserves to suffer the penalty, which it righteously demands. Still however he would gladly escape with impunity; and hesitate not to use every exertion, which may

possibly effectuate his purpose. The consciousness of deserving punishment in no instance implies a willingness to endure it, much less with the loss of life, and with the certainty of everlasting misery. Were it possible to suspend the dread and aversion from death; would that render us the most suitable subjects for the reception of divine pardon? Were we willing or could we readily become willing, to receive the curse of God; what feeble effects would the proclamation of pardon produce upon us! But, while we fear and dread the sentence of death, the tidings of mercy are enrapturing; and we can never sufficiently praise that omnipotent hand, which hath brought us up from the gates of death, snatched us as brands from the burning and made us the subjects of a blissful immortality.

The doctrine which the affirmative of the question announces, is attended with injurious effects upon the cause of religion. Our holy religion is perfectly amiable, possessing internal and intrinsic excellence. A practical regard to its sublime doctrines and righteous precepts furnishes a glorious display of its worth and loveliness. The Divinity has wisely warned the world of the danger of deviating from its requisitions, or incorporating with them the idle chimeras of human speculation. She can derive no advantage from ornaments and decorations, that are brought from the field of supposition and conjecture. They

only serve to veil her celestial image, distort her features, and diminish the power of her charms. The christian who imbibes the doctrines of the gospel, whose life and manners are meliorated by their influence, who reveals the lovely forms of holiness and virtue before our eyes, commands the affection of our hearts, and inspires a fervent wish to walk in newness of life with the saints of God. On the other hand we may be presented with piety under such colours, as are nearly forbidding. When its possessors discovered an austerity of manners, and a sourness of temper and disposition; when they rigidly maintain the necessity of marvellous exercise, and establish their hopes upon evidences far without the sphere of visible and practical obedience to the rules and spirit of the gospel; when they pretend to frequent interviews with the angels and spirits; when they pretend to be instructed by audible voices; when they pretend to have travelled in trances to the heights of heaven, to the depths of the earth, and to the chambers of the morning; when they attest the truth of these pretences with sighs that chill the blood, and groans of deep distress; when they exhibit these things, religion assumes an aspect entirely destitute of charm and attraction. Of this kind is the pretended willingness to receive condemnation. This exercise is announced and deemed essential to the evidence, that we are the children of God. A band of believers present

themselves before us, richly instructed in the school of experience. They are treading the path of Zion, surrounded by celestial light. They invite us to accompany them on their glorious journey; but proclaim, "Ye also "must be willing to extinguish the love of "life, and at a moment's warning to strip off "the garments of salvation. Ye must be "willing to see your names erased from the "book of glory, and enrolled on the register "of infernal spirits." From these requirements we shrink back with horror. Our path is darkened, our hopes languish, and the loveliness of religion ceases to pour its enchantment upon our souls.

The doctrine, which is opposed in this chapter, is among those things which prejudice mankind against religion. The feelings of the natural heart are always ready to aid and confirm the errors of a distempered head. Exorbitant pretensions concerning patriotism, benevolence and religious exercise, cannot fail to excite suspicion, and create aversion. Are these pretensions inconsistent with practical truth? do they contain the means of their own demolition? we are generally willing to give them sufficient latitude to destroy in our view real and existing principles. The world is not careful to discriminate piety from its mutilated forms, nor religion from its abuses and corruptions. Thus they judge christianity to be fabulous, and deny the celestial origin of religion. When we hear the os-

tensible friends of the gospel proclaiming such acquisitions of love and resignation, that they could willingly submit to condemnation; we search the realms of moral agency, and all the records of divine requirement, and finding nothing to countenance such doctrine, we are liable to believe, that all religion is but an empty shadow. We should all do well to remember that Moses, when about to build the Tabernacle, was admonished of God; "See thou do all things according to "the pattern showed thee on the mount."—Then will our "light so shine before others, "that they seeing our good works glorify our "heavenly father." Were we actually willing to be condemned, what shocking effects would be produced in the conduct of life! There is a connexion between our actions and our will, and every performance, that is destitute of volition, is but an empty form. We are required to love our neighbors as ourselves; and it is evident, we must love ourselves as our neighbors. If then we are willing to endure the wrath of God we are willing that others should likewise perish. What rational soul, however, would not be shocked at hearing us declare our willingness that our fellow mortals should become the subjects of condemnation? We should behold their blood upon the skirts of our garments without alarm or dismay. And there is the same propriety in declaring that we will lead our fellow mortals to the gates of death, if it should

be for the divine glory, as in asserting that we would become the subjects of condemnation upon the same supposition. Where then is our concern for the salvation of others? To what amount are our exhortations, our warnings, that others may flee from the wrath to come? It is happy for the world, that believers do not, and cannot practice in conformity with this doctrine of wild and extravagant speculation. And it is also happy that those who think they stand, are prompted by the holy spirit to take heed lest they fall. According to the wise arrangement of things, the edification of the saints is made to depend very much upon social intercourse, and upon reciprocal aid and instruction. Peter was thus admonished by the Redeemer: "When thou "art converted, strengthen thy brethren"—Timorous faith solicits the befriending assistance of enlightened experience, and is often strengthened and confirmed by the counsel it receives. The brightest gem may lose its lustre in a solitary residence; so our virtues may be stripped of their essential properties, and expire in the cells of seclusion. Christian exercises are quickened and rendered brilliant by serious society, and they receive a lasting polish from devout association. Do we mingle with the righteous? we discover in their sentiments and lives an actual exposition of the divine word, and a clear illustration of the efficacy of its doctrines. The light of their example gives to the momentous con-

cernments of the soul a pleasing and encouraging aspect. Our serious inquiries are rewarded by accessions in knowledge, growth in grace, and by the blissful expansions of heavenly light. Persuaded that our temporal and eternal happiness depends upon a proper and unreserved submission to the divine will, we are all anxious to obtain a hopeful assurance that our submission is the pure and unadulterated offspring of grace. Do we enquire of those, in whom we have reposed an unsuspecting confidence? and do they inform us, in solemn sanctity, that our resignation is but a painted bubble, floating upon the surface of troubled waters, unless we are willing to drink for ever of the vials of divine wrath? the cold tremors of doubt and despair pervade our hearts. The love of life, the love of holiness, the love of heaven are all alarmed at the thought of their own extinction. Thus we are kept in a distressing posture without the threshold of the visible temple. We long for that table whose bounties are interdicted, and for a communion with that Redeemer, by whose blood we had indulged a hope that we were sprinkled, and united with the saints of the living God. Believers are often called to visit the sick and dying. It is a reasonable expectation, that we should enter their solemn chambers, to administer the balm of consolation. There is often a serious demand for our faithful exertions, in order to remove those bewildered thoughts, fears, and doubts, that

are common to dissolving nature. Delightful is the consciousness of being honored as the instruments, employed in quickening the hopes and confirming the faith of departing piety, to assist with guardian angels in procuring from dying lips the song of victory.—These agreeable effects however are prevented, when we demand a willingness of them to be condemned, as an indispensable evidence that they are the children of God. By questions of this nature we darken their prospects, enhance the pangs of agony, and encurtain a dying bed with terror and dismay. Wandering beyond the boundaries prescribed to our agency by infinite wisdom, we are liable to convert into torture the consolations of religion, and to envelope ourselves and others in doubt and darkness. The above observations have all been made in sincerity. It is known they are not congenial to the speculative opinions of many renowned christians.—It is believed, however, that they are consistent with the rules and requisitions of the gospel.

CHAPTER V.

COUNTERFEIT RESIGNATION EXPOSED.

THE picture of human life is crowded with delusions. In this state of imperfection, none are favored with an exemption from their influence. The strictest vigils of philosophy; the most assiduous precautions of religious wisdom are incompetent to prevent their subtle encroachments. From the birth of time to the present day, man deceived has been the deceiver of man. By the artifices of aspiring ambition, how many miserable generations have been employed in forging the chains of slavery for their necks, while they fondly indulged a belief, that they were manufacturing gems and ornaments to bespangle their own garments; yea, they have been employed in accumulating around them the poisoning darts of calamity, while they dreamed of strewing with flowers their path to the grave. Political delusions are not more frequent than those of a religious nature. What monstrous conceptions and adulterous doctrines are palmed upon mankind by imposture, defended by bigotry, protracted by the collisions of parties, and consecrated by the assumed prerogatives of pious zeal. We deem it a reproach to our understandings and integrity to be deluded by our fellow creatures. We had rather endure fatigue and pains, than be decoyed into rest, through the avenues of

designed enchantment. Hence we are prompted to guard, with some degree of watchfulness, against the delusions to which we are exposed from the beguiling labours of men. Yet our vigilance is insufficient to procure us an elevation above the empire of deception. Our defence against self delusion is naturally feeble. There are few fears to excite our caution, and no mortified pride to enforce a personal examination. Thus we learn to live on fiction. A pleasing phantom may become the staff of our life. Do our self delusions contain a promise of our temporal and eternal felicity? We embrace them with avidity, and oppose with violence those solemn truths, which require the enchanting pictures of delusion to be dissolved. Counterfeit resignation is among the religious delusions to which we are exposed. Depraved and wretched as we are, we fondly attach the name of resignation to carnal languor, to insensibility, and to our philosophic bravery. Are we enabled by a natural magnanimity to endure with unmurmuring fortitude the calamities of life? we obtain an ideal rank for ourselves among the sons of evangelical submission. Knowing that tranquility and peace of conscience are the effects of resignation, we suppose that every tranquilizing influence arises from that source. The impaired patient who lingers on the verge of death, whose slumbers are procured by opiates, not suspecting his critical condition, dreams himself into long life.

Thus are the pangs of our moral distempers and the rising murmurs of the spirit suppressed by the slumberous nostrums of self-righteousness, or by the balm of security; we flatter ourselves, that we have escaped from danger, and smile as we give to our souls the counterfeit bloom of immortal health.

The subjects of resignation are all supposed to be ready for an entrance into glory; and can we pass the scenes of life, with quiet and composed steps? Can we, from any cause, declare that we are willing to die? we are sure, that the surviving will believe that we sleep in Jesus. Though it excite the frowns of the world to expose its false religion and exhibit the deceitfulness of the human heart; yet there may be some returning with joy from their enchantments, praising their Maker, that their delusions were dissolved, and succeeded by the hallowed forms of truth.

Natural and revealed religion require us to resign and renounce all our sensual pleasures and dissipating amusements. These things generally control the morning of life. The taste and feelings are alive to their delicious influence, and the fancy uncorrected by the dictates of sober reason, promises a charm to every rising desire. As man advances, his predilection to the gaudy vanities of sensuality gradually diminishes, and becomes supplanted by different propensities. The rigorous demands of domestic exigence; the objects of honour and ambition, together with

a variety of new attractions beget an aversion from the scenes of youthful folly. The chambers of hilarity are stripped of their delight before him, and he chants at the sound of the viol no more. Through the deception of the heart he easily obtains a belief, that he has taken an important step on his passage to glory. He looks with indignant scorn upon the employments that once constituted supreme delight to his soul. He displays to the world the ensigns of victory and triumph.—Marvellous are the feats of victory over propensities and pleasures that expired of themselves. Marvellous to relinquish the objects that are removed from us by unavoidable necessity. This strong infatuation, however, becomes one of the subtle features in counterfeit resignation. Often do we suppose, that we have made very signal attainments in self denial, when in reality we have only lost our relish for illicit pleasures, or they are interdicted by the empire of fashion, and are counted incompatible with the pursuits of pride and honour. The imprisoned pirate, whose chains forbid him to go down again upon the deep, may boast of acquiring a triumph over the last struggles of a disposition to plunder, while his chains are his innocence, and the bolts of the prison his virtue. In like manner may the exhausted voluptuary boast of surmounting his sensual inclinations, while his abstinence is necessity, and his reformation a satiated appetite. Our lusts and our evil pas-

sions are liable to lassitude and decay. The flame of lascivious desire is sometimes extinguished by its excess, but more frequently stifled in consequence of the experience of the maladies it inflicts upon its possessors. The fear of public disgrace may have a powerful influence in restraining this polluting propensity; and it is sure to languish with the diminution of bodily strength.

From the cravings of sensuality it may become our greatest concernment to riot on the bounties of Providence. We lavish our time and exertions in procuring luxuries, in compliance with the demands of a restless and extravagant taste. But appetite is liable to be worn out and vitiated by a licentious indulgence. Sickness, pain, and the distempers of the mind, may abate its violence, and change it into aversion.

An avaricious lust after the world is generally insatiable. Povidential events, however, may check its exhorbitant demands, and the occurrences of time may repress its grasping rage. The solemn conviction, that we must soon leave our glittering treasures to an unthankful world, our splendid tables to the merriment of unknown successors, throws a forbidding discouragement upon the toils of avarice. When these effects are produced, we flatter ourselves, that by a noble magnanimity we have resigned and renounced our lusts. Wrapped in delirous visions, we believe our hands to be unspotted from the world; we

discover our souls purged, by moral alchymy, from their pollutions. We feel a security, while our hearts have experienced no other change than the loss of power and opportunity, to cherish its sensual delights, and pour its affections upon the polluted scenes of life.

The retirement of our vices, their diminution and decay, furnish another ingredient in counterfeit resignation. Malice, hatred and revenge, with other passions of similar turpitude, have seasons of slumber and concealment. There are many whose characters, to human perceptions, are richly adorned with benevolence. Their malice is unawakened by provocation. Their wishes are gratified by the smiles of prosperity, and their inclinations are neither crossed nor molested by civil discord. They gaze with wonder at the prevailing malice of mankind, and recoil from such instances of deep depravity. They appear also possessed of a brotherly benignity. The envy of the heart is secreted from view, thro' motives of personal emolument. For promotion and popularity are best attained, by breathing their kind and friendly wishes upon the world, by exulting in the joys, and feeling in a three-fold degree, the miseries and pangs of their fellow creatures. Their revenge rankles in their breasts, but the finger of public scorn forbids its visible labors, and long-suffering and forgivness are proclaimed as the brilliant emblems of christian distinction.—Whereas a change of conditional circumstan-

ces may dissolve the specious glare of their excellence, and summon into dreadful energy their evil passions, which appear like monsters, replenished with vileness and strengthened by repose. Thus we delusively build our hopes upon the suspension of evil and upon negative virtue, while our lusts and passions are neither resigned nor renounced, and while we have no acquaintance with that sovereign grace which is necessary to their real extirpation. Our claims to faithful husbandry can be but feebly supported, when we pass the ground destroying the thorn and the bramble, but leaving the unsubdued soil to repeat its natural growth and produce its poisonous plants. Yet such is our delusion, that the suppressing of an evil propensity, or the extinction of one vicious inclination begets an opinion, that we have complied with the requirements of self denial. We fold our hands to rest, while iniquity is rapidly ripening in our corrupt and unregenerate hearts.

It is difficult to distinguish whether evil habits be renounced from selfish motives, or from the triumphs of gracious and pious principles. Man may be induced by a revived sense of decorum and the natural love of character to discard many traits of conduct that are unbecoming. But this will constitute no title to true resignation. Evil habits are subject to a change of forms; and it is often conjectured, that the evil is renounced, when it is only concealed under new and less alarm-

ing appearances. What a variety of changes there are, through which the habit of intemperance may advance! With the same character, it may pass from a gluttonous reception of food, to an extravagant use of inebriating liquid? and from these, into an infinite variety of excesses. Other habits are subject to similar variations of forms. Present habits and indulgences conceal their iniquity and danger from the discernment of carnal minds; and men rejoice in the exploits which they have performed in renouncing the habits of evil deportment, while no deed of the flesh has been subdued by the spirit, and no gracious affection has ever glowed in their hearts. Vain are reformations, that are not followed by the fruits of righteousness. Transient are those hopes, which are not built upon grace; and counterfeit is that resignation which renounces the world, but retains a rebellious spirit against the sovereignty of Heaven.

The sin of idolatry has darkened the complexion of the ages that are past, and tarnished with deep disgrace, the dignity of man; and its prevalence in the heathen world, is still acknowledged. An escape from idolatrous guilt furnishes a security to many of our fellow-creatures. They believe idolatry to consist in clothing, with Divine attributes, some warrior, sage or mortal goddess, in pouring out the praise of the heart to images of polished clay, and in burning incense to the invisible tenants of the sky. They can heartily boast of having renounced these impious

and disgraceful practices, as an effrontery upon reason and the immortal Divinity. They can now hear the awful threatenings denounced against the children of idolatry without the least alarm. They felicitate themselves that they have washed their hands in innocence, and drawn around them the spotless diadem. Others of deeper thought, conscious that a supreme attachment to any created object is idolatrous, have so manfully exerted their strength in the work of renunciation, that there is no remaining image having sufficient influence to command their reverence, their prayers, and the affections of the heart. Destitute of Divine love, shrouded in the darkness of depravity, they are composed, and cherish the pleasing hopes of Heaven. There are others, who may have been merely convicted of idolatrous sins, who may love and serve the Lord, from the good, they hope to obtain from his munificent hand. They may extol his name, through fear of punishment, and detest the whole scenery of idol objects, in order to conciliate his favor. Deceived by their specious but counterfeit emblems of pious distinction, they enrol their names among the godly and the resigned, and while strangers to the cross, bearing the weapons of spiritual rebellion.

In surveying the prevalent vices of the world, we naturally feel a peculiar pleasure, that our own agency has not been employed in their production. Not being chargeable

with the profanation of holy time, blasphemous language, intemperance, violence, injustice; our pride receives additional plumes, and we fancy ourselves the blissful objects of moral purity, and loudly vociferate our thanks, that we are not like other men. In like manner, we view the superstitious notions and deleterious doctrines, that are current with mankind, and rejoice that they are not enrolled among the tenets of our own faith. How often are we heard to describe the chimerical opinions of others, their absurd and pitiful platforms, exulting, that we are not blindly led to embrace these disgraceful religious absurdities. By proving that we are not the votaries of superstition and bigotry, we delusively arrive to the pleasing assurance, that we are what we ought to be, in perfect conformity with Divine requisition. Great is the deceitfulness of the human heart, and great the danger of those sweet delusions in which it wraps our immortal souls. Were we allowed the privilege of naming before the tribunal of God ten thousand crimes of which we had never been guilty, and as many follies and absurdities, which we had cautiously resigned and rejected, it would be but pronouncing our own condemnation, while destitute of holiness and the renewed image of the Divinity. Thus do we renounce the vices of the times and the false doctrines, that prevail in the world. It may charm our souls to rest for a time; but may leave a probability, that we

also discard the doctrines of the gospel, that our purity is negative and our resignation of a counterfeit kind.

Numerous are the refuges invented by the wretched subjects of apostacy. Their munitions of safety are constructed with the most brittle and perishable materials. They often consist in nothing more than visionary speculations, and the treacherous hopes of favor and strength, yet to be manifested. When these are deserted, they resort to the citadel that is erected by the amicable charities of life, and the sole efficiency of the moral virtues. Being driven from this by the misgivings and fears of conscience, they seek their safety in long and sonorous prayers, frequent seasons of fasting, and sighs of solemn melancholy. Sensible that the atonement for sin must be procured by expiatory sacrifices and suffering, they think to co-operate with the lamb of God in this great achievement. Thus they retire to penance, mortify and torture the body, confident that they have left behind them every refuge of lies to be swept away by the hail. They make frequent mention of their ill deserts, their great sufferings and appear to long for opportunities to suffer more for the sake of Christ and his kingdom. With peculiar ease and readiness we conceal vital pollutions under the gaudy colours of a self-righteous mantle, and fondly cherish the belief, that we are the children of Heaven and her favorite sons, when hypocrisy is dis-

tilling its fatal poison upon the soul. The real christian enlightened by the spirit of truth, can well remember the rovings of a deceitful heart, the various positions he had taken for security, how often he had received alarm and again cried peace to his soul, before his pride and enmity had been radically removed by grace, before he was constrained to be willing in the day of God's power; and before his resignation was rendered genuine by the transforming infusions of divine love.

To resign the soul and all its momentous concerns to the hands of God, fixes on man an everlasting distinction. Here, as in other things, we are liable to delusion. It is not difficult to submit ourselves to the control of Heaven, while the divine government wears a propitious aspect. There are visitations, which may awaken the murmurings of the heart contrary to previous opinion and expectation. Motives of temporal emolument and personal glory intrude upon us and maintain their influence in disguise. In discriminating their agency from the real influence of grace, the powers of natural discernment are thoroughly baffled. Could christian charity have ever suspected the insincerity and voluntary deception of many disciples of Jesus? Had they adopted the following language: "We have forsaken the endeared spot of our nativity, the delightful abodes of childhood and youth; we have torn ourselves from the embraces of filial and conjugal affection, and

left them to mourn our absence ; and now, O son of God, we subject ourselves to thy government and the righteous counsels of thy will." Yet, when they were informed, that the Redeemer's gifts did not consist of earthly splendour and secular distinction, but of spiritual bread and manna, that came down from heaven, they forsook him and fled. We may suppose ourselves entirely resigned to the doctrines of christianity. Are there any, however, that oppose our fixed opinions, requiring our debasement and humiliation? we are ready to debar their influence and rank them among the secrets, that belong to the Lord. We lay down the weapons of rebellion, but wish to reserve some favourite toy and pleasure to beguile the hours of sorrow, and drive the rising gloom from the mind.

There is a constitutional insensibily in some, that is easily mistaken for pious tranquility and actual resignation. They are moulded to apathy and formed of fibres so obdurate and fixed, that it requires the warmest greetings of prosperity to excite a smile upon them, and when excited, the loudest thunderings of adversity are scarcely competent to drive it away. They meet with the loss of friends, but this is insufficient to press the tear of sorrow from their eyes, or to wring one drop of agony from the heart. They discern the approach of public calamity ; they observe its threatening aspect, yet they are free from fear and trembling, their slumbers

are unmolested and their concerns are still preserved from derangement. Composure, bravery and peace of conscience being the notable attributes of resignation, they have no hesitancy in maintaining their claims to its possession.

Many, who are naturally susceptible of deep and lively impressions, become hardened under the influence of habit. The repeated strokes of calamity benum the powers of sensation and often enfeeble the energies of thought. Looking back upon our childhood, what trembling awe did then pervade our bosoms, in observing, for the first time an eclipse of the meridian sun? In what solemn and fearful attitudes have we listened to the voice of the winds roaring in the mountain forest. How sensibly have we felt the sweet emotion of joy and pity, as we viewed the panting dove escaped from the deathly talons of its bloody pursuer? And who can describe the thrilling dread, we have experienced, when first informed by maternal language, that we were dying worms hastening to the dust whence we came? These vivid susceptibilities are in a great measure, destroyed by time and habit. We easily learn to behold the most dismal phenomena of nature without dismay. We hear the cries of agony from the beds of death without any very lively emotions. And the momentous realities of death and judgment can scarcely awaken a fear or command a serious thought.

The noisy clarion of war, that awakens the ardor of the soldier, may be employed by habit, to lull the infant to sleep. Thus under the reiterated shocks of adversity and frowns of Divine Providence, we are liable to become hardened and unmoved with the impressions, which these things are designed to make upon the heart and mind. Possessing a calm and quiet disposition, we are not anxious to inquire whether it consist in the habitual sloth of feeling and stupid security, or in the exercises of pious reconciliation. We suppose we are resigned to the Divine will, when we are only doomed to a sluggish indifference by the power of habit.

In conformity with the natural pride of the heart, we are prompted to endure disaster and what is usually denominated the misfortunes of life. The school boy, who can bear the chastisements, that are inflicted upon him with the fewest tears and least complaint, who is least affected by the accidental wounds he receives in the sportive gambols on the green, is at once entitled to the praise of his fellows for manliness and bravery. This disposition, which reveals itself in childhood, is carried into the succeeding stages of being, and into scenes, where its consequences are of a momentous nature. How many seem to exult in giving particular descriptions of the losses and calamities, that have marked their progress in the world. They deem it degrading to the dignity of man to allow a depression of

spirits from unavoidable trials. They delight to display their fortitude and their own strength, and hide their murmurings from others, until they become invisible to their own eyes. They pass through all the vicissitudes of time, musing with delusive joy, on the fictitious portrait of resignation.

There are but few, who have the boldness to deny the rectitude of the holy divinity. It comports with the fashion of the day to acknowledge, that "whatever is, is right," and to announce, at least, a speculative opinion, that all things will redound to the greatest good. These ideas are comprised in the savage song, and in civilized praise ; they are named alike by the lips of the infidel and the true believer. Under the weight of trial and calamity we are prone to hope, that some ultimate advantage corresponding with our wishes, will succeed our troubles. The toils and fatigues of life are patiently endured under the sustaining expectation of arriving to great enjoyment. A speculative belief in the wise and merciful designs of God, combined with the hopes of obtaining, happiness, have a natural tendency to compose the mind, in meeting the afflictive dispensations of Heaven. The pains of a day or a night are easily charmed away : we are assured, they are but the pangs, that precede the birth of new and lasting joys. And do we expect that our afflictions will bring about that good, after which we are aspiring? the murmurings of the

heart are suppressed, and a philosophic but delusive calmness pervades the mind. Destitute of the gifts of grace and the purifying influences of the spirit, this calmness is resembled by the suspended commotion of troubled and unhealed waters: it deposits a deadly sediment in the springs of life.

It is impossible to ascertain what men would do, had they power proportioned to the measure of their evil propensities. We are informed from Divine authority, that the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; that we have said unto the Lord, depart from us, for we desire not a knowledge of thy ways; and to the Redeemer we will not have thee to rule over us. But irresistible necessity curbs our ferocity into a visible tameness, and keeps in concealment much of the malignity of nature. Born to dependence, we find ourselves surrounded by dangers and trials, from which there is no escape. We are more helpless than the fowls of the air; for the eagle can soar on high, and leave the storm to roar and rage below; and more helpless than the beasts of the forest; for they can hear the sound of the horn and the prancing of the hunters afar off and flee into refuge; but man cannot evade by any possible artifice or physical strength the afflictions and calamities, to which he is righteously doomed. They enter alike within the portals of magnificence and the tent door of the pilgrim. They descend alike upon the fool and

the philosopher. Experience speedily informs that resistance is vain; that our struggles against unavoidable calamities give a greater depth and more imbittered poignancy to our wounds. To repine at events that have taken place, can never alter them or cause them to be disannulled. Unto this argument we all recur for comfort and support. Natural reason and enlightened philosophy induce a persuasion, that fortitude and patience will best subserve our interests and assuage our grief. The composure, that is produced in the mind from a conscious inability of making successful resistance, furnishes no colour of evidence, in favour of evangelical submission. The tyger, in bondage, will howl and bite his chains, till he find his labours fruitless, then, nor till then, will he tamely lay down to rest. Thus man under the irresistible destinies of Heaven, may rage until raging become hopeless, and then be tired into visible submission, retaining within him all the subtle ingredients of a carnal mind.

Public calamities are dismal and affecting; yet they are often productive of changes suited to the interest and promotion of some, and suddenly remove from their eyes the tears of sympathetic sorrow and excite the blush of joy. Jealousy perpetually broods on the hearts of the avaricious. There is always some supposed impediment, the removal of which they earnestly desire. Contagious and fatal disease frequently gives them an opportunity to

extend the land marks of their possessions; and by the exit of their fellow creatures to concentrate in themselves, a larger share of lucrative business. Feeble are the struggles of friendship against the power of interest and after a few fashionable sighs and lamentations, they survey with perfect composure the ravages of death upon their fellow men. Civil convulsions and national revolutions promise bread to the wretched, emancipation to the prisoner, and aggrandizement to restless and aspiring ambition. Hence a considerable proportion of the community will bear with fortitude these awful calamities, so long as they can be sheltered from personal evil. The seats of promotion excite their hopes; the wide field of speculation is opened before them; riches and honor demand their courage, and they are quietly resigned to these afflictive visitations. When the heavens frown upon the earth and cause her fruits to fail, and the poor are heard to cry for bread; are there none who patiently submit to this dreadful judgment, computing their enhanced gains upon their stores and the enlarged revenue of their merchandize? Being deeply depraved and liable to self-deception, it is not uncommon to imagine ourselves resigned, when honor, promotion, and private emolument are the procuring causes of our quietude and patience. Though this kind of resignation have considerable currency in the world, it is counterfeit and false, and it evinces a dangerous and

blind security to hazard upon it, for an hour, the welfare of the soul. It is almost impossible to be unaffected by the dissolution of tender and endeared relatives. A variety of causes, however, entirely foreign from Divine grace, may have a tendency to allay the anguish of bereavement and restore to the mind a species of tranquility. Violent agitations, both in the natural and moral wold, are generally of short continuance, and they are succeeded by quietude and silence. The fountain of extreme grief is soon exhausted, and the convulsive emotions of the heart waste their strength and subside. The bosom of the mourner is open to the reception of rest from the diverting and composing influence of surrounding objects. Among the mysteries of life is the conduct of the husband, who returns from the solemn interment of his companion, and wipes away his tears to select a second bride, and meditate upon her charms. With great facility he obtains a triumph over his recent affliction, treading again in bewildered vision the enchanted paths of youth. Under these circumstances he readily concedes to the doctrine, that God is just, and that the judge of all the earth will do right. The legacy from a departed brother, and the enlargements of our possessions are themselves so pleasing to nature, that they may have an imperceptible but powerful influence in composing the mind, and in making us acknowledge that all things, under the Divine

control, shall work together for good. In cases of this kind natural causes produce a kind of quietude and submission, which to mortal eyes may look like resignation, but to the searching discernment of the Divinity they are mockery and delusion.

How wretched are those, who are neglected and deserted in the hour of tribulation, having none to discern with tenderness their tears, or to hear with compassion their grievous complaints. Sweet is the voice of pity to the sons of sorrow. It diffuses a soothing influence over the distressed heart, and excites the softened energies of responsive feeling, under which the poignancy of grief is forgotten and lost. It is what ancient affliction earnestly solicited: "Have pity on me, O ye, my friends, for the hand of the Lord hath touched me." The afflicted well know, with what sincerity they have welcomed to the chamber of distress their sympathizing friends. And with what undissembled gratitude they have received the alleviating cordials of pity.—Such are our social ties, and such the dependencies of life, that we not only seek relief from others, but actually obtain support from the benevolence and pity of our fellow-creatures. The alleviation of sorrow thus procured, is far from proving that we are the subjects of gospel reconciliation. For this must arise, not from the commiseration of man, and the tender services of mortal benevolence, but from the compassion and pity

of uncreated eyes, and from the holy influence of Divine grace.

The necessary cares of life have a great influence in wearing away the grievous impressions of calamity. Called from the cells of sorrow into the scenes of secular concernment, our tears are gradually diminished, and the distress of the heart is imperceptibly transfused into a variety of cares, where its imbittered influence is felt no more. The solicitude of the widowed parent for a surviving infant; her anxious endeavours to defend it from the intrusion of pain and the hand of death; her toils to procure its comfortable support; the plans which she feelingly devises to adorn with science its tender years, and give it an honorable entrance into active life; all these things alleviate the pressure of bereavement. Being sustained far beyond her expectations, she is liable to conclude, that the spirit hath helped her infirmities, that her composure is the result of grace, when it may be nothing more than the effect of diverting objects. It is hard for the mourner to enter the circles of gaity and fashionable amusement. And it is hard to endure a melancholy seclusion from the world. It is frequently thought a sufficient apology for recurring to scenes of vanity, can we persuade ourselves, that we do it with reluctance and entirely to prevent our falling a sacrifice to dejection and gloom? Amusement diverts the mind, removes the anguish of the heart; and

we return from the enchanting chambers of mirth and pleasure, divested of our melancholy burdens. It this way we forget our chastisements; smile in our security, and rejoice that our darkness and sorrow were transient as the morning cloud. This, however, furnishes no colour of evidence, that our will is subdued and our hearts subjected, through the influences of grace, to the will of the holy Divinity. It is morally possible to submit with calmness to afflictive events, and yet be destitute of genuine resignation. Men may patiently endure distressing calamities, having no discernment of God nor reverence for his holy name; and they may scarcely be able to ascertain, whether their trials are the result of chance or arise from the control of a sovereign God. When bereaved of an endearing object, it is the particular unhappiness of some to lose their relish for every remaining blessing. They become the wretched votaries to a sullen melancholy. Their minds are soured by disappointment and the extinction of pleasing hopes; and they look with disdain upon all sublunary enjoyments. In their distress they are heard to exclaim, our joy is darkened! The comforts, of which we are so liable to be deprived, are not worthy of our affection. We have no wish to prolong our painful pilgrimage on the earth. Thus they think themselves resigned. The cup of affliction is pressed to the lips, and they are not desirous to have it removed.

They are willing to languish away beneath the rod of chastisement. All this is entirely opposite to evangelical resignation. It is more like the delirium of a character drawn in romance, who, being disappointed in the object of his affections, retreats from the world and becomes the voluntary victim to sorrow, hoping that unborn generations may be made to weep, as they read the inscription upon the urn, that contains his dust.

That man is righteously doomed to suffering, in consequence of his sins and numerous imperfections, is a truth universally acknowledged. Entertaining a belief that our suffering may appease the wrath of an offended Divinity, we endure with unmurmuring fortitude the afflictions and calamities, into which we are providentially called. Even the christian, not always alive to a correct discernment of things, secretly cherishes an expectation, that his pains and distresses may in some measure answer the demands of Divine justice and obtain at least the favour of Heaven. On this ground his hopes of a blissful immortality, are brightened and rendered sustaining to his soul. Oh ye followers of Jesus, have you never, in your unguarded moments, admitted the vain thought, that present sufferings will entitle you to future rewards?—When wearisome days and nights have been appointed unto you; when you have experienced bereavement on every side; and when you have seen the wicked exulting in their

prosperity, have you not been comforted from an idea, that you were actually atoning for your sin and purchasing a crown of eternal life? Are christians liable to these deceiving thoughts? it is evident that the unregenerate embrace them; that they are sustained in their trouble by their influence, and erect upon them their hopes of glory. The following soliloquy of a deluded and unrenewed soul very probably contains the sentiments of a considerable part of mankind.

"Hard fortune has pursued me hitherto in life. The cruel hand of adversity has robbed me of every dear delight; while others have basked in the radiance of prosperity, grief and sorrow have overwhelmed me. I am conscious of guilt, but my sufferings will purge it away. The last pang of agony will soon arrive. The scene will change and joy and gladness will become my portion. I shall arise from tribulation in spotless purity, having suffered to full amount, for my sins and transgressions." By this strange infatuation, they are induced to submit to calamity with great composure. They vainly attach to suffering the office of atonement, which is the exclusive prerogative of the bleeding and dying Lord. Although their resignation administers a transient support, and promises the inheritance of approaching felicity, it is counterfeit, impious and vain, and will be swept away as a refuge of lies.

A quiet submission to death is, generally,

thought to be synonymous to a preparation for that momentous event. Surviving affection mourns in hope over the graves of those, who calmly relinquished the tenure of mortal life, and retired without reluctance to the world of spirits. Dying language is solemn, and charity forbids a suspicion, that it ever proceeds from wilful hypocrisy and designed deception. A word, therefore, uttered under an immediate view of eternity, furnishes in kindred opinion as much assurance, as though it were pronounced by an angel. Stained with guilt, fearless of God and averse from his sovereign grace many are found, who are ultimately composed in the hour of dissolution, declaring with their latest breath, that they have no desire to live, that they are willing to depart. Hence it is not the greatest of mysteries, that the pencil of friendship is employed to paint, in glory, so many of the deceased. Indeed, there are but few whom she refuses to consign to a glorious immortality.—Were we not liable to delusion, to deceive ourselves and others, both in life and in death, observations upon this point would be rendered unimportant. Since, however, the heart is deceitful; since it is written; "Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven;" and since it is evident, that causes foreign from grace, may make us willing to die; we have no reason to conclude that all, who meet with calmness their great change, are the subjects of genuine

resignation. And it may subserve the interests of the immortal soul, to expose the delusion, the flattering but counterfeit submission, by which it is imminently endangered.—There are a variety of considerations, which have a tendency to render distressful the chamber of sickness. The pleasing projects of ambition pursued in health with untired avidity, are suspended and wrapped in doubt. The schemes for accumulating riches, are dissolved and leave the soul to be tortured by the fruitless cravings of avarice. The tender attachments, that are felt for kindred friends, are made to tremble in our bosoms through the fear of dissolution; and the delicious care of providing for their support, and aiding their progress in life, is exchanged for a painful anxiety concerning their welfare in the world. A thousand joys and pleasures refuse to approach the gloomy retreats of the diseased; we call for them in the watches of the night, but we call in vain. Circumstances like these clothe with terror, the scene of confinement. These terrors, however, by imperceptible degrees will vanish away. The fire of ambition is gradually extinguished, when excluded from the objects, by which it is excited. Under the languors of sickness property is divested of its fascinating power, and reckoned among the trifles of time. Desire fails, and the objects of the world appear to be worthless. The pleasures, that commanded our eager pursuit, and that were embrac-

ed with rapture, no longer charm our hearts, and we become willing to bid adieu to life. Remembering, with what ardent conflicts we first meet the attacks of disease, and conscious of our present quietude and calmness, we readily include ourselves among the subjects of resignation. The change of feeling, produced by sickness and bereavement entirely from their natural influence, is often blindly mistaken for a change, that must be effectuated by the spirit of Divine grace. That much of the submission, which is discovered in the subjects of sickness, is counterfeit and false, can hardly admit of a doubt. Attending physicians! how many have you seen, who were tranquil and calm under the expectation of death, made willing by long confinement to depart; and when raised to health again, returning to their former habits of vice, resuming, with increased effrontery, the weapons of rebellion against their God.

The lingering ravages of mortal disease on the body, are generally accompanied with pain, or with a restlessness, which is irksome and hard to be endured. No object is too dear or too precious to be given, in order to obtain a deliverance from excrutiating distress. Treasures, that are accumulated by the anxious labour of years, and preserved as the apple of the eye, crowns with all the trappings of human grandeur, would be freely resigned, could they purchase an escape from the pangs they are doomed to feel. When

despair has darkened our prospects, and all the world is found to be insufficient to afford us relief, and the affectionate commiseration of our friends can no longer sustain our spirits, we are compelled to look for rest through the gates of death. We become willing to sleep in the dust.

Were resignation the offspring of pain, we might find it very strikingly displayed on the dying couch of the debauched voluptuary; in the dismal haunts of female prostitution; and in the dark retreats of aged intemperance; for *there* are the keenest pangs of dissolving nature. And here are the most frequent instances of being forced by pain, to long for the slumbers of death. The choice of dissolution in preference to life is, in itself, but a feeble and fallacious evidence of genuine resignation to the will of the Divinity. And though it procure the hopeful opinion of the world, it may be no more than the wild infatuation of a self-deluded soul.

The relish of life is sometimes destroyed, by a continual series of adverse events. Nature alone cannot sustain the repeated shocks of calamity. If some are hardened by numerous chastisements, others languish beneath them like the sensitive plant, that is bruised by the foot of the traveller. Do we not become stupid and callous by the continuation of trouble? We are liable to fall a sacrifice to excessive grief and unsanctified sorrow. When our undertakings are rendered abortive, and

our desires are appointed to expire, or remain ungratified, our courage faulters, our temporal hopes vanish away, and despair compels us to bow to its dark control. Thus we are willing to leave a world of toil and tribulation, and to lay down where the weary are at rest. If the spirit have not borne testimony with our spirits, that we are the children of God; if we have not been sprinkled from an evil conscience by the blood of the Lamb; this submission to death is but a proof of the wretchedness in which we are involved.

The certainty of dissolution is among the first truths, that are impressed on the mind. Every moment confirms the solemn reality, that there is no possible way to elude the approach of the destroyer, death; no bribes, nor threatenings, nor tears can purchase his forbearance or suspend the effects of his cruel toils. Overtaken by desperate disease, it is no rarity for men, from the necessity of their case to reason themselves into a kind of submission. It is appointed unto all men once to die. A few fleeting years will bring the haughty potentates of the earth and their disheartened slaves alike to the grave. Temporal existence is of short duration, and the longer it is protracted, the longer we are in dying; for life itself is but a mere lingering kind of death; and do we survive? it is like the mariner rescued from the quick sands to fear and tremble another hour, and then to fall upon the rocks to rise no more. From reasons

like these, they learn to acquiesce in the inevitable doom, and decorate their own tombs with the laurels of heroic victory. Destitute of piety, their resignation is a mere phantom hovering over a bewildered mind, or the vapour that sports at midnight over the receptacle of dead men's bones.

That resignation is counterfeit, which arises from a confidence in negative virtue, and an exemption from particular sins and daring criminality. In that tender age, when our parents more pious than prudent labour to defend our innocence, by erecting around us a hedge of bugbears and furies, we are led to believe, that some sins are connected with inevitable ruin; and to avoid them is thought an infallible security both to our temporal and eternal welfare. The consciousness, that we have never blasphemed the holy Divinity, nor treated with disrespect his counsels and government, is often a soothing anodyne to the soul in the hour of dissolution. Can we lift our hands from a dying bed, and declare them unspotted from rioting, from injustice, and other sins of similar turpitude? it begets in the natural mind a pleasing expectation, that we are sufficiently pure to reside in those mansions above, where nothing shall enter, that worketh abomination or that maketh a lie.—Our scrupulous endeavours to avoid certain transgressions are flattering to reflection and excite within us the fallacious hopes of Heaven, under which we view the approach of

death with tranquility. It was undoubtedly a comforting thought to Hazael, that he was not so much of a tyger as ever to be guilty of barbarous cruelty; but it was to his condemnation, that he then possessed a heart vile enough to murder by the severest tortures, that could possibly be employed in spreading death through the female world. We are prone to feel a security in life, and a submission to death from an idea that we are free from the deeper stains of guilt, that our characters are only shaded with trifling faults, and unavoidable infirmities. At the same time we may possess an unsanctified heart, and a soul that retains not a single celestial feature.

The natural man places great confidence in the efficacy of moral virtue. Being addicted to habits of prudence, and prompted by the combined influence of reason, pride and ambition to the practice of the benevolent and charitable virtues, he supposes his claim to future happiness unalterably secured. He is highly flattered with a retrospective view of life. From the specious field of meritorious works, he gathers flowers to strew them upon the bed of death. Self-righteousness pours its transient lustre upon him. Secure and composed he resigns himself to his inevitable fate, gazing upon the star of his God, until it become a star of wormwood, and shed its eternal bitterness upon his deathless conscience. An awful disappointment awaits us, if we depend for salvation upon our own strength,

and are tranquilized in view of death, by the enchantment of our own excellence. The balances are in the hand of God, and do we bring forward our own moral virtues, equal in number and lustre to those of the patriarch, when weighed, we are found wanting! The hand writing appears upon the wall of our refuge. Where is that holy Divinity, who worketh in us to will and to do his pleasure? Where is the blood of atonement? Was it sprinkled to the wind; or poured out, merely to colour the cross and stain the ground, on which it fell? Where is that righteousness, which alone can procure our own justification? Ah! to be soothed to rest by the smiles of our own virtue is counterfeit resignation.—Better hopes may be entertained for such as are groaning in bondage through fear of death; who tremble at the multitude and enormity of their sins; who feel the most terrific apprehensions of the judgment to come, than for those, who have worn the garments of outward purity; received the laurels of mortal praise; and calmly bowed to the empire of dissolution; yet denying and rejecting the only name, whereby we can be saved.

From erroneous and partial views of the Divinity we guild with delusive hopes the evening of life. Mercy and benevolence are the pleasing attributes, to which we repair for support in seasons of tribulation, and also when we are distressed with the compunctions of guilt; and so long as we are blind to Di-

vine justice, we can easily tranquilize our minds under an expectation of relief and forgiveness. Surrounded by temptations, we are in danger of falling through the wiles of the adversary, and no artifice has procured him more victims than that of referring us to the pardoning mercy of Jehovah. The traitor, who devises and premeditates his nefarious schemes in the caverns of darkness, recoils from his own designs, goes forward and recoils again, until he hear it whispered;—"The Almighty is long suffering, abundant in mercy and goodness." Hereby the admonitions of conscience are consigned to silence, and the restraints, arising from the fear of punishment are dissolved. Inquire of the sons of poverty, by what persuasion they were first seduced, from the path of honesty. They will probably reply; we believe our necessities were known of God; that his commiseration and benignity would be richly exercised towards our souls; and that his mercy was always ready at our call. Thus we yield ourselves a prey to seduction. If man, by reason of a deceitful heart and perverted understanding, be capable of considering the Divine attributes, in such a point of view as to encourage the indulgence of his evil propensities; to remove the dread of future retribution; and to compose his mind in the presence of death; it is, by no means, the strongest proof, that he is possessed of that holiness without which none shall see the Lord. It is however an ev-

idence, that he has no spiritual discernment of the living God, that he has never felt the power of conviction, nor the terrors of the law. It is an evidence, that his God, divested of justice, is a mere creature of imagination, residing in the fields of fiction.

Some quietly meet their great change, while their quietude proceeds from no other cause than thoughtlessnes and stupidity. Man often languishes away, without the experience of any very forceful impressions, from the danger, by which he is threatened. Debilitated by the influence of disease, eternity and its momentous realties are far beyond the sphere of his meditations. Anxiety, fear and hope all slumber beneath the languors of the flesh. He is unable to inform us, which he prefers, life or death, eternal sleep, or an endless retention of being. Thus, with peculiar felicity he acquiesces under the destiny, that awaits him, and becomes a fruitful subject for praise on the page of periodical print. Resignation is widely different from thoughtlessness ; it is always accompanied with the wakeful energies of faith and love. It removes the sultry dulness and hazy aspect from the evening of life, and opens the soul to the dawnings of eternal day.

A false and delusive repentance is a cause of much counterfeit resignation. There are but few of the human race, who are entirely unacquainted with the feelings of sorrow for sin. These feelings, however, do not always

betoken a repentance, that is unto life. Under the bitter experience of the evil consequences of vice, such as bodily pain and the loss of physical strength, it is natural to bewail our follies while our iniquity appears to be unaccompanied with personal harm, while it is concealed from the world under the fictitious visage of virtue, we often forget the necessity of repentance; but when we are providentially unmasked, and our iniquities appear to the world, with heart rending agony we mourn for our sins; with tears of anguish we survive our reputation, and tremble as we discern our names transferred to the records of disgrace and shame. A great part of the repentance, that we discover, does not proceed from a conviction, that we have offended a holy Divinity, but from the personal evils by which we are overtaken, and from a sense of the shame and misery, we have doomed ourselves to suffer. Natural discernment does not discriminate between a false and genuine contrition of heart. Being conscious on the bed of dissolution, that we deeply lament our sins, we imagine ourselves partakers of the promises, and entertained with the dilicious dreams of salvation, we calmly bid adieu to life and submit to the sceptre of death.

Counterfeit resignation is among the effects of a wild and speculative faith. Combining an extravagant zeal and inflamed enthusiasm, this kind of faith works wonders in the minds

of its possessors. It gives them an undoubting confidence in the Divine favour, and represents in cloudless vision the mansions above. It elevates them above the world and enables them to commune with spirits and angels, with the greatest familiarity. Although it refuses to work by love and purify the heart, it attends many, even in a dying hour, and throws a mimick light upon the falling curtain of time. Pitiful is our condition, when our resignation arises from a delirious faith; and awful will be our disappointment, do we enter the valley of death, bearing the blazing tapers of enthusiasm, but unaccompanied with the reconciled countenance of God?

From motives of temporal advantage the appearance of religion is sometimes artfully assumed. It is dangerous to sport with holy things. The hand of infidelity can never be placed with impunity upon the ark of God, under an ostensible endeavour to prevent its falling to the ground, or with a view to be ranked among the household of faith. It is hazardous to take the incense of the temple, in order to perfume the garments of human grandeur. Hypocrisy may be commenced, with a design to deceive the world, till men, agreeably to their intentions and hopes, obtain the reality of religion, and they become imperceptibly involved in self delusion. They believe themselves possessed of intrinsic excellence, feel enraptured with their high attainments, and rejoice under the imaginary

influences of Divine grace. Thus they are resigned to the events of Providence, and unmoved with terror, submit to the dominion of death. Were charity, this moment, to bend from the skies, would she frown upon the opinion, that there are many, who have assumed the dress and trappings of religion; have lost the consciousness of their own hypocrisy, and passed in visible triumph to the world of spirits?

Delusions throng the walks of life; they also hover over the perspectives of the dying. In some they destroy the apprehension of their impending fate; or procure an indifference both to the trifles of time and the realities of eternity. They wrap the consciences of some in transient but fatal slumber. In others, they excite a train of delicious hopes, and spread around them the enrapturing light of assurance. Thus it happens, that so many, who have never discovered a symptom of piety, announce with expiring language their willingness to depart. The effects of this counterfeit resignation are not confined to its immediate subjects. We are liable to an indiscriminate belief, that submission and a preparation for death are of the same import. We have feelings of tenderness and are prone to security. Hence we readily conclude our friends and acquaintance in the family of the blessed, can we but hear from their lips, the usual language of submission; though they have lived without God in the world, we are

not alarmed at the thought of treading in their steps ; hoping, like them, to leave the world without reluctance, which is thought to be an infallible token of Divine love. Nature allows her streams to sport, as they descend from the hills to linger in the valleys below, to move in a thousand directions, but mingles them, at last, with the waters of the deep. And we blindly trust to nature and her laws to control the aberrations of our will ; to indulge them with a long passage through the fields of sensual delight, and bring them, at last, to be swallowed up in the will of God. Happy for us, do we walk humbly with our God ; know in whom we have believed ; lean on the bosom of the Redeemer, and exchange our mortal breath for eternal life.

CHAPTER VI.

THE INFLUENCE OF RESIGNATION UPON THE PASSIONS.

A GREAT part of the movements, in the moral world arise from the busy impulse of lust and passion. To avenge the aspersed glory of a crown, to gratify the pride of dominion, to extend the land marks of avaricious possession, armies are summoned forth to endure the fatigues and encounter the dangers of war. Envy daily assails its thousands; while revenge hurries on as many to retaliation. Imperious avarice impels its votaries to sleepless toil. They pass from shore to shore; they steal and sell for gain their fellow mortals; sparing no pains to effectuate their dark designs and overbearing violence. How numerous are the transactions that are prompted and controlled by lust and passion? What beaten paths are made to the haunts of wretchedness, to the halls of nightly revel, and to the scenes of brutal intemperance? How much of the language of the lips and the exercises of the heart, proceed entirely from lust and licentious desire? Could all the movements that are made in obedience to a spirit of domination; could all the moral objections that are produced by jealousy and pride; could all the labours of malice and envy; could the numberless steps which are taken in pursuit of sensual pleasure; could all the

ebullitions of the lustful heart; could all these be suspended, but a small portion of human movements and moral exercise would be found to result from sober inclination and enlightened reason. Alas! and a still smaller portion from the exalted motives of piety and the Divine glory. As the gentle undulations of a crystal lake to the restless agitation of a troubled sea, so is the agency, which arises from the dictates of expedience and wisdom, to the wide and noisy commotions of lust and passion.

The bosom of man is evidently the seat and residence of evil and inflammable desires. They are revealed in the barbarous life of the savage, and appear in multiplied forms among the sons of civilization. They are unsuppressed by the refinements of society and the most exalted attainments of science. Reason is too feeble to resist their imperious sway, or to maintain, at all times, an ascendency over them. Human power, with all the devices of natural wisdom, is insufficient to effect their radical extirpation. Yet a pious resignation, as observed in a previous chapter, both requires and procures the removal of unhallowed lust from the heart. Do we humbly kneel at the feet of Jesus? our evil passions retreat and vanish, like the loathsome distemper of Naaman, when he bowed to wash in the waters of Israel. There are passions inseparable from our temporal being, which may by perversion become productive of the most de-

leterious effects; but under the control of religion, they may highly subserve the nobler energies of the soul, and brighten the lustre of a pious life.

The influence of resignation upon these shall be considered.

The passion of anger is universal and liable to be inflamed by an infinite variety of moral incentives and physical provocations. Unrestrained by religious principles and the habits of self command, it leads to scenes of mischief; stifles the feelings of tranquil joy; gives an unhappy bias to all the powers of the mind, and multiplies the labours of repentance. Left to the operations of nature, this passion may become a fury in the human breast, reigning in violence over the subject soul. Are we placed in those climes, where the elements are frequently engaged in angry conflict, where the thunders reveal their vengeance? Are we to-day shivering under the frowns of intolerable cold, and to-morrow fainting under a burning sun? we naturally partake of the awful scenery, and our bosoms become a miniature of the angry appearances by which we are surrounded. Wounded by the impending thorn; assailed by evils which lurk on our way; experiencing the insufficiency of our strength to surmount arising difficulty, our anger awakes and our tempers are roiled. It is well known, that by smaller incidents than these, the sun has often gone down upon our wrath, and we have beheld for

days, the dearest objects with aversion, venting our rankling passions on our most esteemed friends. Sudden bereavements and disappointments that are brought about by the hands of men, have a natural tendency to excite our angry passions. Our feelings are embroiled by the unexpected reception of evil tidings, and by discovering the designs of envy and malice upon our character and possessions. When Job was informed of the murderous toils of the Sabines upon his tender offspring, nature alone would not have prevented his polluting with an oath of revenge the sighing breath, in which he submissively replied: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord." Under the influences of resignation, the passion of anger is unmingled with malice and revengeful fire. While the disciples were treated with indignity and scorn by the unbelieving city, nature cried for revenge. They appealed to the will of Jesus, they were rebuked; their anger was disarmed of its threatenings and changed into the feelings of righteous indignation. Under unavoidable provocations do we spread our complaints before God? do we bow in submission at his foot stool? do we submit our anger to the directions of his holy will? it becomes harmless to ourselves and others, and a useful spring to the energies of the soul. It becomes subsidiary to the defence and the love of character. For when do we appreciate the glory

of a good name so much, as when our indignant feelings are awakened by our malicious and envious associates? This passion, in the heart of reconciliation, excites our vigilance in the cause of virtue. It warms us with unfainting zeal in the service of our God; like the remnant of conquered Israel, we bear our armour and are intensely engaged day and night in repairing the broken walls of the fair capital. We labour with animation in the vineyard of the Lord, to rescue the weeping vine and the drooping plant from the ravages of sin. We look with indignation upon the devices of the wicked, and turn with abhorrence from the works of darkness.

In destining man to a state of probation and making him a subject of Divine government, it behoved the Creator to plant in his breast the passion of fear. Previous to the hour of apostate ruin, it was probably the office of this passion to enforce the law of self-preservation; to keep the soul in a humble attitude; and to spread before it the awful denunciations of judgment against rebellion. But since it has been mingled with guilt, it has undergone a mysterious change, and is liable to the most wretched perversions. It now corrodes the heart with painful convictions, or leaves us to the dangerous effects of a blind security. It is now awakened by the revengeful hornet, and by the bloody poniard; but slumbers beneath the threatenings of Jehovah. It is tremulously alive to the pangs of

disease and the numerous attacks of temporal evil, but is unalarmed by the apprehension of appearing at the bar of retribution and receiving an irrevocable sentence, according to the deeds of the body. Without this passion philosophy is madness, civil government is confusion, and society a wide scene of licentiousness. Nor less shocking are its perverted operations. For here we tremble, when there is no just cause of alarm, we view with timidity the visage and the doings of man, and are ensnared. We discover a thousand frightful forms in the path of duty and retreat. We shrink from the thoughts of death, we are tortured by trifles, and disheartened by the monstrous images of a wild imagination.—Resignation has a very evident effect upon all our fears. It removes us from those that arise from inconsiderable and visionary causes. It brings us nearer to Heaven, and into that state of Divine composure, where we are inspired with a pious boldness, and enabled to withstand the invectives of the wicked with all the slander and persecution of the world. Why should we be dismayed in pursuing the path, which we know is prescribed by infinite wisdom? Why should we be frightened from the bosom of Jesus by man, who can destroy the body, but can do no more? Those objects of nature, by which our fears are addressed, reminding us of that day, when her fair fabric shall be dissolved, awaken within us those feelings which partake of the devotional and

sublime. It is then that we feel and enjoy those prayerful fervors, that are richly infused with love and the fear of God. In our deviations we hear the voice of threatening, not so much to torment as to afford us the delight of returning with meekness to the path of duty. Under the exercises of a holy submission we are delivered from a slavish fear of punishment. The terrors of conviction are changed into contrition of heart, which permits us to hope and love, while we tremble at God's word. We are afraid of offending him, and coming short of rest through unbelief. A submissive and faithful adherence to the Divine will affords an infallible security to feeble mortals, against the disheartening and wasting apprehensions. Even the woodbine, that entwines the oak, has nothing to fear from the trampling foot of the destroyer: it mocks the movements of the dust below, and remains unhurt by the storm. How much more shall God secure those precious souls, who piously adhere to his will, and unto whom the Redeemer hath said, "fear not, little flock, it is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

The passion of love is happily controlled by the influences of resignation. This passion is sometimes revealed in the strong desires and aspirations after greatness. Left to ourselves, we are liable to be grossly mistaken with regard to true magnanimity. We are naturally inclined to believe, that it consisteth

in a series of heroic deeds and mortal exploits, in the energies of inventive genius, in the possession and display of great talents, in outbraving the alarms of danger and the attacks of pain. These are deeds and exercises, that travel in tradition and in history from age to age. Resignation teaches us to leave them to their own destiny to be sought and admired by the offspring of Boanerges; and opens before us a field of greatness, that is equally accessible to the sons and daughters of men.—The genuine splendors of greatness, rested upon Hannah, when she lent the light of her eyes and the joy of her heart to the Lord for ever. And the greatness of the deed was consecrated by the sublime magnanimity, in which she uttered the praise of her God.—More glory was exhibited by the finger of faith, that touched but the hem of the Redeemer's garment, than the hand of conquest and the arm of Pharasaic achievement could boast. Do we search the annals of heathen mythology, which of the sisters of Jove has ever been famed for a deed equal in sublimity and greatness to the deed of Mary, when she annointed the Redeemer's feet, and wiped them with the locks of her head? NELSON was great in the empire of the seas, but the stars of his glory were eclipsed by the last effort of magnanimity; when dying he said, *God's will be done!* By resigning ourselves to the will of God, we admire and pursue that greatness, which is agreeable to his ho-

ly pleasure. How diminutive is the boasted son of human magnificence compared with the humble and resigned pilgrim, who bears the restored image of his Creator, and whose sanctified body is the temple of the living God! Those acts of duty, which are performed under the threats of temporal danger, and to the resistance of great temptations, excite our admiration and kindle in our bosoms a hallowed ambition. Can genius sufficiently eulogise the sublime grandeur, that characterizes the efforts of chastity, when she repels with indignant frowns the guileful arts of seduction. It is greatness to perform in secret a benevolent deed, to surmount our prejudices and act the true Samaritan. It is greatness to overcome our vices and evil habits; to move undaunted in the path of rectitude; to obey the will of our heavenly father; to bear the armor of light; to be visited by celestial spirits; to expire with songs of victory in the arms of Jesus; and be conveyed by angels into the eternal residence of the blessed. Ye mighty men of the earth, who delight in empire; ye men of genius, who explore with daring eyes the darkest recesses of nature; ye iron nerved heroes, who outbrave the ills of life, who tread with unblushing boldness the ground of hazard; it is yours to dazzle the eyes of the world, with the false glare of greatness; it will also be yours to see your glory and greatness vanish away, while the trembling hope of meekness shall be succeed-

ed by a holy magnanimity, and be crowned with triumphs and everlasting joy.

Honour is among the objects that we pursue with eager avidity and embrace in all the fervours of extravagant attachment. The love of honorary distictions may be traced from the remotest games of childhood. When we excelled our fellows in arriving first at the goal, by venturing the farthest in feats of hazard; and by dancing around the cheerful ring with the lightest airs and sweetest grace; then have we crowned our little brows with garlands of distinctions. Nor less alive is the love of honour in the walks of academic life, and in all the romantic chivalry of youth. How have our bosoms beat in quest of scientific laurels, and in obtaining the plaudits of the gay and genteel world! In riper years we are enchanted with the glare of titles and the trappings of secular renown. In the moment, that we are resigned to the Divine will, our love of honour is transferred from transient objects to those, that are unfading and eternal! Our claims to honor, upon hereditary principles, are renounced as delusive and vain. We refuse to entrust the welfare of our souls to the fame of a noble ancestry. For this, without personal worth, can but scarcely support the mimic lustre of our name. Resignation is far from destroying the desire of distinction, which is an essential spring to the energies of the soul. When conforming ourselves to the dictates

of infinite wisdom, we become enamoured with the emblems of christian excellence, we labour with a holy zeal, to obtain the robes of righteousness, which are mercifully prepared for those, that will bow to the sceptre of the Redeemer. Can we become his true disciples, and be honored with the visits of his grace? We obtain a distiction, which all the splendors of science could never create, and which all the powers of darkness cannot destroy.

The feelings of reconciliation maintain a very evident influence over our love of the world. The christian with peculiar delight resigns himself, his possession, and all his concernments to the righteous disposals of the Divine will. Called into being and appointed to inherit the earth, he highly appreciates the objects, that surround him, as they answer the exigences of life, awaken the powers of perception and the energies of thought; especially, as they are so many mirrors, in which he discerns something of the revealed attributes of his God. The gifts of nature and the bounties of Providence excite at once the mingled sentiments of gratitude of dependence, and of human frailty. Under these softened impressions he is inclined to lean upon the arm of his benefactor, where he recognizes the riches of that love, which gives, and the justice of that holy hand, that taketh away. These exercises of submission do not destroy his attachment to the world,

but purge it from every idolatrous ingredient, and consecrate it to devotional and salutary purposes. They are tenderly susceptible of sublime entertainment from the order, the beauty, and grandeur, that characterize the works of creation. Is he entrusted with earthly treasures? He is conscious of great responsibility and labours, with unabating assiduity to be reckoned a faithful steward. Though he be delighted with his riches; it is not on account of the transient splendor they create; but because he is honoured with the means of protracting the breath of the deserted infant; removing the sigh from the breast of the orphan; and of alleviating the disheartening burdens of the poor; administering to the necessity of the saints; and hereby increasing the incense of thanksgiving and praise, that is devoutly offered to God. Are we destitute of resignation? our love of the world becomes a consuming fire. It bewilders our thoughts, driving us from one vanity to another, deluding us into a belief, that our glittering treasures contain the chiefest good. Thus we make a God of dust, and a heaven of scenes that fade away.

Sexual attachments often originate in mystery, and are cherished by similarity and contrast; by the vicissitudes of hope and doubt, quietude and concern, and also by reciprocal and affectionate attentions. This species of love depends very much upon the influence of resignation for its purest fervours and the

constancy of its operations. The pious youth selects from the world a fair object, who appears in enchanted vision to be possessed of more than mortal charms. Trials and conflicts are incident to the scenes of love. When providential events seem to darken his prospects of possessing the desire of his eyes, resignation prevents his affection from being transformed into desperate resolution, or degenerating into the feelings of melancholy and wretchedness. He resigns himself and his dearer enchantress to the will of Heaven. His affection is still alive, and richly blended with the sublime and ennobling sentiments of immortality, he travels on the wings of faith to those celestial abodes, where congenial souls shall meet to love and be loved for ever. Who can describe the feelings of his heart, when he receives for the last time, as he fears, the hand of his seraphic charmer, and listens to the tremulous accents, that are uttered in all the sanctity of reconciliation. "It is the will of God; we must submit; forget me not in your prayers at the throne of grace; plead that the light of the Divine countenance may illuminate my path to the grave." He responds with tears alone. His affection partakes of something, which cannot be named nor described. Ministering spirits, that are sent with errands to different parts of the earth, may meet again in the skies, and ascend together to the presence of their God. In like manner, congenial souls when called

by Providence to move in separate walks, will soon arrive in rapture to the point of immortal union. Does a propitious Providence restore the delightful aspect of his concerns, and enable him to possess the object of his attachment? angels might bend with pleasure from Heaven, to inspect the renewed interview when it shall be known, that they were remembered of each other in constant and fervent prayer, in the wakeful vigils of the night, in solitude and in the circles of society, in the holy exercises of resignation, and in their acknowledgment of the rectitude of Heaven. Love like this, is both immortal and pure. It is kindled and fed with live coals from off the altar of reconciliation. The state and conduct of an irreligious and unresigned youth are of a different complexion. His love is liable to painful violence and to all the evils of bewildering romance. Perplexed, by the intervention of adverse events, he challenges the destinies of Heaven, and opens the avenues through which the poison of jealousy reaches and corrodes the heart. If gratified in the attainment of his object, his love becomes alternately the fawnings of groveling affection, and the frowns of malignant coldness. The disasters that overtake him abroad ; the trials that are inseparable from domestic life, gives sourness to his temper, and excite those fumes of passion, which stifle and murder every smile of joy in the chambers of love. On the other hand the

affection of the resigned is softened beneath the mellowing hand of affliction, and partakes of something truly celestial, as it advances in the path of trial. If there be a hallowed and sinless hour in mortal life, it is when we unite with the fair companion of our days, in pleading with submission for the life of a languishing infant ; when, in the troubles of life we mingle our tears with those of sympathetic tenderness and praise our God for the sustaining gift, for his last, his fairest work. Pleasures, like these, are unknown to all but to the meek and reconciled sons and daughters of men. What joy is there in prayerless love or pleasure, that may not be imbittered by a spirit of rebellion? what hope that may not be extinguished ; and what passion, that may not become a scorpion within our breast?

From the miseries incident to life, and from a variety of providential events, we necessarily form an early acquaintance with grief. The morning of existence is frequently wrapped in darkness; and our most promising prospects are dissolved by the hand of adversity. There are causes within ourselves and in the things around us, that daily excite the bewildering sensations of the heart. It is the natural tendency of this passion to give a discolouring to all our views, to depress our spirits, and consign to listlessness the nobler powers of the soul. Uncontrolled by religion, it distils a poison upon every enjoyment, and gradually consumes the heart in which

it resides. Resignation takes away the deleterious effects of grief and gives it an emeliorating and salutary influence. It suffuses our sorrow with a tender melancholy, and associates with it the softening pleasures of hope. When we are grieved at the removal of endeared objects, reconciliation to the will of God renders our lamentations beneficial to the interest and edification of our souls, and leads us to those devotional charms, in comparison with which the brightest joys of sense are marked with a deadly paleness. In grieving at the dying nature of temporal things and at the amazing rapidity, with which we are hurried from the cradle to the grave, the unresigned must also wring the hands of agony over the hecatomb of murdered hours, while resigned grief, mourning the departure of fleeting years, discerns the blissful features of redeemed time blended with the vivid colourings of immortality. Resignation has an evident effect upon the grief, that arises from the wrongs we suffer in our intercourse with mankind. When the returns of our benevolence consist of ingratitude and the chilling frowns of scorn; when our outward characters are made to bleed by the arrows of malice and envy; with what hallowed feelings has our grief been mingled in flying to the refuge of the saints? We know better than we can describe, the swelling impressions in the heart of the child, when abused by ruffian hands, it repairs to the sweet assylum of pa-

rental love and commiseration. The grief that is felt for sin, is tormenting to the irreconciled, but in the moment of submission its anguish is removed, and he feels the hopeful and quickening exercises of contrition. Could Bolingbroke have denied his Redeemer? could Spinoza have warred against the existence of spirit? had they visited, but once, the cell of sorrow and beheld the daughter of resigned grief, lifting her eyes in faith and praise to the great inhabitants of eternity. How much of Heaven and the Divinity is revealed through the translucent tear of grieved meekness!

Irreligious anxiety destroys the felicities of life, and also procures a great portion of the wretchedness, that marks our transient days. It embitters the toils of ambition and gives a painful dissatisfaction both to the pursuits and the possession of wealth. It disconcerts the powers of the mind, and drives from the heart every delightful sensation. Resignation has a peculiar effect upon our anxiety. Removing its bitterness and delirium, it transforms it into a pious solicitude for ourselves and others, and into a quickening and holy concern relative to the events of futurity and the scenes which are yet to come. This submissive solicitude harmonizes with the purest enjoyment and is likewise an efficacious incentive to the punctilious discharge of duty, and to the attainment of christian excellence. Far from painful are those conscious feelings,

that reside in the bosom of the parent and prompt him to guard with vigilence, his rising offspring ; to protect them from the pollution of vice ; to aid the growth of opening genius and feed them with the knowledge of the Redeemer. The serious concern, into which our anxiety is converted, becomes a quickening principle, in providing for our present and future welfare. It swallows up like the rod of Moses the encumbering cares of the world and strengthens our attention to the hopeful works of obedience. Whenever we have reason to apprehend the approach of adverse events, it enforces the necessity of self-examination, excites our watchfulness and awakens a desire to be prepared to meet the allotments of Divine Providence. The lover of his country beholds with anxiety the prevalence of vice, the wild commotions of public opinion ; he discerns with distress the horrors, that descend like stars of wormwood upon principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places ; he watches with pain, the symptoms that have generally preceded the departure of glory and joy. His anxious feelings are ameliorated by the exercises of reconciliation and he entrusts with a pleasurable confidence, the management of nations to the hands of his God. The endeavors of philosophy to suppress the anguish of our anxiety are not always attened with safety. They frequently lead to a cold indifference both concerning the things of time and

eternity. They resemble the prescriptions of quackery, which may remove a malady by destroying alike the seeds of disease and the springs of life. Whereas resignation extracts the bitterness from our anxious feelings, and leaves a kind of solicitude, which is necessary to our agency and richly subserves the cause of virtue and the edification of our souls in Christ.

No passion is more easily excited, more constant and mysterious in its operation, or more effectually poisons the charities of life, than jealousy. Yet no passion is more visibly affected by the influences of resignation. Jealousy has always been considered a prominent and commanding feature in human agency. Its terrific visage has been portrayed on the canvass; its reiterated toils displayed on the tragic stage; and its awful empire has often constituted the subject of philosophic dissertation. Deeming the earth too narrow for the dominion of this passion, the poets have given it a possession in the skies, where it incorporates with the attributes, and darkens the residence of their gods. Most of the means, that are fervently recommended in surmounting our tormenting jealousy, have been found utterly incompetent to that desirable end. The energies of natural reason frequently confirm suspicion, and administer fuel to the purple flames of jealousy. Are we presented with the pernicious consequences of this infuriated passion?

do we survey its effects, in corrupting the endearing fervours of domestic love, in dissolving the charm of society, and swelling the amount of human wretchedness? reason will be insufficient to defend our bosom from corroding suspicion or to purge our jealous feelings from criminality and torture. A holy resignation to the will Heaven renders the jealousy of the heart a subject of control. He, who trembles under an apprehension, that the delight of his eyes may be transferred to the embraces of some successful rival, may call in vain upon his firmness and fortitude; he may recur to scenes of hilarity and amusement; but jealousy will pursue him; it will haunt him in the circles of the day, and in the solitary hours of the night. Does he, however, humbly bow to the will of Heaven, and commit his tender concerns to the unerring direction of infinite wisdom? his anguish is instantly abated; his purposes are rescued from malice and revenge; and tranquility and joy revisit his heart. The painful jealousies which are felt, concerning the barbarous designs of others upon happiness, character and property; the strong and anxious suspicion, that the bonds of connubial affection are doomed to separation; these are rendered sinless and tolerable, through the influence of a pious submission to the Divine will, and by the invaluable consciousness of adhereing to the path of piety and duty. Jea-

lousy, when purified and transformed at the altar of reconciliation, becomes important to the support of personal dignity and excellence of character. It inclines us to guard, with unwearied vigilance, the inheritance of our national, civil and religious privileges. When we incautiously mingle with the world and receive with fearless avidity every token of benevolence, we are exposed to vulgar ridicule, and often find ourselves in great surprise, bleeding under the attacks of malignant aspersion. On the other hand, a righteous and becoming suspicion holds a hallowed centinel over our lips and hearts, administering a perpetual admonition, that the choice of friends be made, with serious and searching deliberation ; that we faithfully discriminate the objects that invite our embrace. Thus we retreat, through paths of honour, from the snares of temptation and the allurements and deceptions, by which we are endangered. Nothing more infallibly portends the demolition of kingdoms, than an unsuspecting credulity. It conducts alike to the grave, the strength, the glory and the happiness of nations. A righteous jealousy is requisite to national prosperity. It brightens and enlarges the sphere of political discernment, and tramples in the dust, the disguise under which domination and tyranny delight to travel abroad. The office of this holy jealousy is eminently useful, in its exercises over our heart and life. We are naturally prone

to evil. Remaining corruptions lurk in the bosoms of the renewed. Vain thoughts and evil imaginations crowd upon us in rapid succession. Being, however, resigned to the will and government of Heaven, our jealousy awakes and surveys the style of elapsed life. It distinguishes between false and gracious affection ; between fictitious and evangelical evidences of belonging to the household of faith. It prevents an idle satisfaction concerning present attainments, and makes us aspire after nobler accessions of knowledge, and after the measure of perfect men in Jesus Christ. Thus the worst of passions by nature is changed, by the influence of grace and resignation, into a passion of indispensable importance in guarding our lives from sin, and in prompting us to obey the will of that immaculate being, who hath styled himself a jealous God.

Our tranquility is liable to be molested by a variety of passions, emotions and contending propensities. Natural exertions may apparently suppress them, but they will still rankle in concealment, and rise again with enhanced fury, at the call of incentive objects. One sentiment of pious submission, one devout and conciliated thought of the Divine Sovereignty, will tranquilize the mind and suffuse the heart with celestial joy. By a frequent recurrence to the shrine of reconciliation, the labours of self-command are faci-

litated; our unhallowed passions diminish, both in number and strength; and the soul is fitted for improvement and edification. Thus will our purified passions assume a noble office; accelerate our progress to christian excellence, and feed within us, the unceasing aspiration after that inheritance, which is the incorruptible portion of the resigned.

CHAPTER VII.

THE INFLUENCE OF RESIGNATION ON DISPOSITION AND CHARACTER.

AN amiable disposition is justly reckoned among the richest gifts of nature. The parent searches, with timorous avidity, for the indication of genius, in his rising offspring; and is no less engaged in discovering from their earliest actions a pacific temper, a prevalent inclination to honorable deportment and benevolence. The endowment of a good disposition is desirable and advantageous. It shines through the rugged features of personal deformity; it softens the looks of barbarity; and richly amends for the rudeness, defects and forbidding singularities, which characterize a considerable portion of mankind. It supplies the want of brilliant talents, and is influential in raising and supporting those refined attachments, that charm wherever they are felt, and leave the heart in pangs, whenever they are dissolved. How many irregularities and licentious extravagances of youth retire to oblivion, merely because reputation has announced them well disposed and inoffensive, in the main current of agency and design! If the disposition be vile and mischievous, it incurs a baleful odium, which darkens and overwhelms the boasted glare of genius and the brightest glory of philosophic invention. The evil designs of the heart pollute the fame of greatness, and crowd, without distinction, the most as-

tonishing labours of body and mind, among the countless monuments of human depravity. What picture can be more hideous than that which is composed of natural and moral deformity, and coloured with the deepest dies of malignity? We recoil from it as from a fury! Sensible of the infelicity of a thoroughly biassed mind, relying upon the aids and efficiences of education, in forming an amiable disposition, the prudent part of the world have unsparingly appropriated their exertions to this benevolent and important purpose. Parental care is tremulously concerned to protect the charm of infancy, and to cherish in her offspring, virtuous propensities and endearing habits. She wisely conceals from their young and wakeful inspection, the scenes of domestic altercation. She directs their taste to objects whose properties leave on the mind the most meliorating impressions. She kindly inducts them into nurseries of science, and into the chambers of civil accomplishment. She discerns with rapture the fair germs of loveliness, blushing into life and beauty. Alas! how often are prospects blasted! how often is the pleasing fruit of her toils dissolved, like a transient vision; and she is doomed to the pain of beholding the promising disposition of her offspring converted by the frowns of trial and disappointment, into a sullen morosity and evil inclinations, arising from their latent condition, portending inevitable ruin!

A disposition that is formed from the influence and exercises of resignation, is of celestial

birth, subject to no entire extinction, uncorrupted in prosperity, and triumphant through all the storms of life. Some in the civilized world inherit a natural ferocity, and are inclined from the cradle to every species of criminal enormity. Their rudeness increases with their years, and is confirmed by the various occurrences of time. Like the insidious spider, they imbibe a poison from the fairest flowers of nature; and day and night they are the pitiful subjests of the star of wormwood. Education and the light of science are insufficient to remove their malignity, and are resembled by the magic lights that dart their baleful rays through the iron grates of a haunted castle. The rust and rudeness of such are irremovable by the foil of association, and their malevolent inclinations unconquerable by all the arts and labours of friendly persuasion. The effects of resignation upon the temper and disposition of these rude sons of nature are great and interesting. Under the discipline of the holy Divinity, their hearts are transformed, the rising corruptions of nature subdued, and the violence of infuriate passion, exchanged for a spirit of meekness and humiliation.

Affliction and trial being attended with a sanctifying influence, are commissioned to wear away the rugged prominences of moral and remaining deformity. Their actions assume an agreeable aspect, and are consecrated to permanent praise, by the purity of intention and the integrity of the heart. From the

most forbidding and barbarous feelings, they become the objects of esteem in the eye of reconciliation. In the sacred vestry of submission they receive the whitened raiments, and appear with harmony and love among the assembly of the saints.

Some are born to the possession of a great assemblage of agreeable qualities, and are uniformly disposed to habits of moral virtue.—They acquire with facility a knowledge of men and things; they are susceptible of all the tender impressions, that claim respect and readily receive in a high degree the polish of refined society. Common discrimination is bewildered in attempts to investigate the features, in which their resemblance to the sons of reconciliation essentially fails. Allured by the charm of their manners and the expansive benevolence of their heart, we place them above the necessity of amendment. Is, however, the influence of resignation undiscernible on their disposition and lives? Has our holy religion found among the children of nature, a number upon whom her transforming power cannot be exercised to visible advantage?—Characters, who bear the stamp of loveliness, are capable of a glorious alteration through the exercises of resignation. To resign a predilection for the objects of sense; to surmount the allurements of the world; to relinquish the gaudy fabric of self-righteousness; to adopt a devotional and pious style of conversation; to renounce the unbecoming levities that

characterize the circles of fashion; to be meek and mindful of God in prosperity; to be still and patiently devout in adversity; to do, experience and exhibit all these, is the exclusive glory of reconciled souls. The grace of Christ is not limited; and if, by a holy submission to the will of heaven, the most barbarous heart and life are changed and claim the plaudits of pious approbation; what transcendant lustre of disposition and character must be displayed, where resignation is less conflictive, and where grace has less of the plague of sin to remove from the heart, and its holy efficiences are given to control the brilliance of natural powers, and dispose the soul to imitate that holy Being, whose agency is eternally stamped with goodness and truth.

Nature and art are more successful in forming an agreeable disposition, than they are in preserving it from the contagion of vice and the unhappy alterations to which it is subject, from the diversified scenes of time. Much of the amiableness that distinguishes and endears the auspicious and unincumbered period of youth, is transient and vanishes for ever from our view. Like the morning rainbow, with all its alluring beauty, it betokens a noonday darkness or an evening tempest. Man is often unknown, as it regards the qualities of his heart and mind, while he walks in the paths of prosperity. Unaccustomed to the attacks of calamity, his temper is unruffled and he may seem disposed to goodness and virtue. Af-

fliction and disappointment call into view the inward man, rankling with malignity, prevailingly inclined to rebellion. Being destitute of resignation, the charm of their outward excellence is dissolved in the furnace of trial. Large is the number of those, who thus disappoint the charitable hopes and delighted confidence of the serious and wise. When they commence the habits of brutal intemperance; when they become polluted by habits of fraud and injustice; when they arm themselves with violence; the inquiring world ascribe all these new born enormities to some peculiar trial or bewildering disappointment. They plead, in apology for their guilt, the irresistible and ruinous effects of misfortune, while Heaven knows that the malady is seated in an evil and irreconciled heart. The disposition of the submissive suffers no evil in the day of calamity. But the fairest picture of moral glory may be blotted out by a deed of rashness; and the splendour of a useful life be tarnished forever, by bowing to the sceptre of temptation, and refusing to hearken to the mandatory voice of Jehovah.

Our mortal inheritance is crowded with a variety of trials and calamities. No human strength can turn them aside; and neither the devices of the wicked, nor the holy importunity of the righteous can procure a path, that is entirely free from disappointment and sorrow. Afflictions of every kind have an essential influence on the disposition and heart. This influence is like a chymical fire; it

promises to waste away, in subtle vapour, the rising enmity of the heart, while it gives to this vital poison, a more deleterious power, and prepares it to be diffused, with an amazing volatility, through all the energies of body and mind. In others, it melts away the tinsel image of loveliness, and mingles the brightest gems of civil excellence, with the useless crucibles of the furnace. There are many, whom it softens for a time, and only fits them for a more impenetrable hardness, and prepares them to stand as fearless of God, as the iron image of ancient vision. These unhappy effects of affliction upon the disposition and mind of man, are avoided by the holy agencies of resignation, and all things are made to work together for good. The pure gold is liable to no diminution from passing the fire; the dross and alloy are left behind, and the precious substance receives additional purity from every successive trial. In searching for the well disposed, and for those whose tempers are infused with celestial love, whose benignity is not the creature of prosperity and propitious occurrences, we must leave the sons and daughters of nature, and repair to the shrine of reconciliation; there shall we find dispositions of intrinsic worth, and hearts that are moulded to virtue and holiness, whose garments of praise are the incorruptible gift of heaven.

As the disposition is much controlled by the influence of resignation, so likewise is the actual character of man. Pitiful is the opinion

entertained by thousands, that youthful inoffensiveness, united with the fashionable civilities of life, and an inclination to perform the duties of morality are the constituent principles of respectability and worth. Good character is not the growth of an hour; it is not called into being by the transient salutation of the early dew, and the benignant ray of prosperity. These may originate a resemblance to the subjects of reconciliation, but like figures of waxwork, it retains its mimic beauty, while sheltered from the storm, but melts to deformity in the heat of the day, and moulders to oblivion under the mist of the evening. Resignation to the will of Heaven is indispensably requisite in the formation of character. The youth, who is governed by this holy exercise, is prepared to retain and enhance the glory of natural endowment, and of civil and scientific acquisition. Far from relying upon the outward splendor of action, success and prosperity are not permitted to bewilder and ensnare his soul, but kindle to purer fervors his love of a munificent Divinity. His virtuous principles are uniformly exercised to answer the demands of Divine glory, and they reveal themselves in forms both of local and of universal benevolence. Every trial he is doomed to meet, confirms his integrity, and gives him an additional elevation above the vanities and allurements of the world. Many characters that are formed independent of the exercises of resignation, perish in feats of violence, or languish in

the scenes of voluptuous dissipation. Thousands go out apparently unspotted from the world, and return in an hour, indelibly tarnished with corruption and vice. A reconciled spirit is free to go where providentially called; it may travel the streets of the licentious; it may pass the camp of infidelity, withstand the fiery darts of the wicked, and still retain the unmarred countenance of the saint.

Multitudes are raised into notice by an aspiring ambition. Their interest requires them to maintain an ostensible integrity of heart, to manifest a glowing and expansive benevolence, and to espouse, with indefatigable zeal, the cause of virtue and national aggrandizement. Attended with success, they obtain an exalted place on the rolls of fame. They are charmed with the fascinating splendor of their own deeds, and having a name to live, they belive that name to be immortal. Alas! the race of ambition is short, the prize is vain, the pleasure painful, and the glory transient! Being destitute of the spirit of reconciliation, and disregarding the will of Heaven, they are driven by the frowns of Providence, from the daring heights, to which they have soared into the depths of disgrace and despair.

Mental accomplishments and civilized manners are considered among the requisite materials of character. These are usually collected in the tender years of life, and raised into amiable forms, by the fostering hand of parental care and academic instruction. Untried by

experience, the fair pupil is inspired with enrapturing hopes and beholds with a pleasing enthusiasm the gilded perspectives of futurity. He advances into the world, disappointment and calamity assail him, temptations induce him to suspect the rectitude of divine government, and the materials of his character not being cemented by vital piety, nor defended by resignation are wrecked and thrown into ruin. Stripped of his artificial disguise, he appears in the ranks of the rebellious enemies of God. If we be guided by submission to the Divine will, our early acquirements are consecrated to continual enlargement and permanence, our undertakings are stripped of their danger, whether they succeed or fail. What early genius and a becoming deportment have promised the world, we are enabled by the spirit of reconciliation to exhibit with encreasing lustre before their eyes.

The usefulness of character depends greatly upon pious resignation. Men of eminent talents and honorable principles are capable of services, that are worthy of praise and beneficial to the world. The secrets of nature have been explored with surprising success by the unde out. The paths of science have been illuminated and the burdens of life diminished by the labors and inventions of unhallowed genius; and the political sceptre has been swayed to advantage by those who asked not of God for wisdom. The good of society is daily promoted by exertions that are made

without regard to the divine glory. If characters may be thus useful, independent of resignation they must be infinitely more useful, when formed by the guidance of Heaven, they abound in spiritual and temporal advantages. It may be dangerous to imitate any fellow mortal, till our hearts become reconciled by the power of grace. The hearts and motives of others are reconciled beneath the glare of noble actions and tribes of imitating adventurers aspire to drink with them the lavish eulogies of fame. Pleased with the resemblance, they reject the only pattern of perfect excellence. The greatest models of moral virtue are liable to failure. In times of grievous visitation, they leave us to wander alone in the wilderness of trial, to repine, to murmur, to languish and die. On the other hand the subjects of resignation are not inferior in their useful efficiences. In the day of prosperity and in the night of affliction they are burning lights on the rugged coast, that invite and guide us to safety.

A constant and heedless view to the divine will and an unshaken confidence in the rectitude of providential dealing leave no hour of life in which is wanting the most powerful motives to benevolence and virtue. As the light and the darkness are alike to the Lord, and his goodness is an unceasing principle in his righteous agency, so those who duly regard his holy pleasure and aspire to bear the restored image of their Maker, are uniformly engaged in noble pursuits and munificent

deeds. The purest charities of the heart are often exercised in secrecy from the gazing world. Is our benevolence to slumber unless it can appear in great parade and ostentation? A great portion of our time must expire without profit to ourselves or others. And who can say that this is not the pitiful condition of many unresigned souls, whose characters however, are elevated to the heights of popular renown? The utility of actions is not to be calculated alone from their tendency to temporal good, for this bears no proportion to the everlasting good of the soul. By the influence of resignation we are qualified to alleviate the burdens of the depressed; to remove the heavy melancholy and perplexing doubts that hang upon the prospects of the afflicted; and to describe that sure refuge for all the children of reconciliation. No love of moral fame can incline the heart to benevolence and charity, like a holy regard to the will and glory of the Creator. If we are providentially beaten in the storm; if we are disheartened by a succession of trials; if we are persecuted by the invidious; while there remains a drop of agony to be wrung from our hearts, it will be kind in heaven to lead us to the doors of our humble and resigned fellow mortals, rather than to plead for the commiseration of those who refuse subjection to the will of God.

The influences of resignation are conspicuously displayed in dignifying the human character. The intrinsic dignity of man must arise

from virtuous and holy principles and the conformity of his actions to the will of Heaven. Conciliated sentiments of the Divinity, under all his dispensations, never fail to originate a resemblance, according to our measure with his moral attributes and perfections. Our forfeited claims to his favour revive, by the exercises of submission, and are re-established by the word of promise. The disgrace of apostacy is effectually removed, and we are favoured, with a participation of his communicated glory. Dignity that arises from natural endowments, splendid achievements, or from distinguishing titles is vain and transient. But the honour that is bestowed through the exercises of submission is formed of emanation from above, and is both immortal and divine. The beauty of character is also intimately connected, with a uniform and reverential subjection to the divine will of our Creator. The subjects of regeneration are not immediately permitted to inherit the full measure of perfect men in Jesus Christ. The remains of corruption lurk within them; infirmities and moral rudeness mark their best exertions, when however, they are called into the school of adversity and resign themselves under the rod of chastisement, their faults are corrected, their hearts meliorated and a new and more fervent obedience gives additional fairness to their moral beauty. Resignation quickens and purifies the tender sympathies of nature. It is easy to distinguish, from the unrelenting

multitude, those who have experienced a refinement from the softening hand of affliction. Their deportment is endeared by its peculiar mildness. They need no promises of reward, in order engage them in the labours of benevolence. Being conformed to the will of Heaven they adorn and dignify their character with all the graces of our holy religion.

The acceptability of character in the sight of God must depend upon the reconciliation of the heart to his holy will. The temporal advantages of a regular and active life are universally acknowledged, and the infelicities moral iniquity are proclaimed from all the of haunts of the wretched. The fair forms of virture and godliness procure the good opinion of the world. Habits of temperance and sobriety render the paths of promotion accessible to our feet, enable us to participate with a lively relish the bounties of Providence, and favor us with a valuable share of social entertainment. The useful labours of genius command the privilege of basking in the full efulgence of mortal praise. Yet all these are insufficient to stamp a real worth upon character. The applauding voice of millions can never delude the judge of the earth, nor confound before infinite discernment the distinctions between the labours of his grace and the works of human strength. Hence an intolerable poignancy must attend the disappointment of those, who fondly compute the essential worth of character, from the transient benefits it pro-

cures them on the journey of life. They supposed their virtues and the amiability of outward deportment would purchase them an everlasting residence, in the complacency of the holy Divinity, that their outward appearance would be competent to conciliate his favor, and make them be classed with the saints in glory. The great inspector of men and of conduct will penetrate the tinsel disguise and approve or condemn according to the state and complexion of the heart. Have they followed the dictates of an unsubdued will? they must appear before him, without a trait of his image or a single feature of loveliness. Tremendous beyond description must be that hour, when the boasted decorations of character, the lustre of popular renown, and the splendor of laudable achievements are doomed to pass away, like the charm of a dream. Resignation acquires from above those materials of character, which can never decay. It gives a new creation to the inward man, and draws in the soul a resemblance to Christ, that cannot be defaced by time nor death.—Pleased with the purchase of his own blood and the communicated splendor of his moral excellence, the holy Redeemer will pronounce an eulogium upon the sons and daughters of resignation, and establish their character and glory upon the immovable pillars of eternity.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE INFLUENCE OF RESIGNATION ON DEVOTION.

CONSECRATED by Divine grace, the submissive and devotional exercises of the heart are accompanied with peculiar delight. The soul that is engaged in devotion, is, at once elevated above temporal vanities, where its nobler sensibilities are alive to entertainments, whose worth hath never entered the hearts of the speculative world. The high toned raptures of sense are of a mean origin and allied to pain and anguish; their continuance is momentary, and they are succeeded by languor and irksomeness. Transient is the pleasure of that dream, in which we climb to some alluring eminence; and it is often succeeded by the breath suspending pain of falling into the depths of wo. So our ascent in raptures is frequently followed by the most depressing sentiments of wretchedness. The joys of devotion are far different. Are they high? they do not fatigue the powers of the mind. Are they faint? they cease not to be pure and precious. They flow from the Divine nature, and never can suffer any diminution of excellence from the most grevious vicissitudes of temporal life. Public and private devotion will for ever characterize the children of God. Although, it cannot be supposed that the counsels of the Almighty will be altered by the

intercessions of piety; yet devotion is appointed as a mean of access to the throne of grace, and also a medium, by which the rays of sovereign mercy are poured upon the soul. The fountain of natural light is the same from generation to generation. If the shaded and withered plant in the forest be invigorated and clothed with glory through the influence of vivifying light, it is not because the sun hath altered its course, but because the hemlock and night shade are radically removed from soil, and no longer beshroud it in their fatal the darkness. Thus if the soul be renewed by devotion and quickened by Divine light, it does not imply, that the purposes of God are changed, but rather that the sins and stubbornness of our hearts are destroyed, which alone exclude us from the light of his countenance.

Public devotion mingles with it a fellow-feeling, calculated to enliven our love of God and man, and is designed both to improve our social talents and to honor in public our great Creator. Secret devotion seems to bring us nearer to heaven, where the soul without reserve can unbosom all its desires. It is highly probable, the purest joys are found in this private access to the throne of Grace. Resignation is indispensably requisite in this delightful employment.

The resigned soul alone is qualified to commune with the holy Divinity; it cheerfully acquiesces in the disposal of events, and is

raised towards heaven, with increasing love and reverence. Resignation brightens before it the glorious perspectives of faith, and enables it to discover the unalterable righteousness and judgment, which are the habitation of God's throne for ever. Without submission there can be no pleasure in devotional employment. Prayer would become an empty form and the earnest pleadings of the heart would constitute a scene of solemn mockery. The unresigned can have no regard to the Divine glory, either in their secret exercise or open transactions. They contend for the dominion; or, in other language, endeavor to persuade the Almighty to bend from the counsels of his own will, and conform to their feelings and views, instead of aiming to be transformed and likened to the Divine nature.

Resignation is accompanied with an impartial feeling for all, whom it shall please God to make the subjects of his Grace. The natural pride and revengeful sentiments of our hearts would induce us to a different course and pollute our sacrifice with malevolence. We should feel at least a secret unwillingness that God should make the poor and wretched and especially our inveterate enemies as fair or fairer candidates for glory than ourselves. Devotion, that is wrought in the spirit of true submission, deposits all artificial distinction with hatred and malice in the dust, and unites in joy with the hosts of heaven over one repenting sinner, whether he be a beggar, who

trembles at our gate, or a magistrate, who rules a nation, and rejoices in the hope of meeting in heaven all those unto whom Christ shall be pleased to administer an entrance.

True devotion elevates the soul into a sustaining view of the divine promises. Even a timorous expectation of their accomplishment upon us, kindles in the heart the sacred fervors of christian zeal. The dreary distance from the present to a future period is enlightened by faith; and without immediate experience of promised blessings the soul is resigned and rejoices that God's word is not subject to vanity, but is unalterably true in every point concerning which it is righteously spoken. Destitute of this submission man is poorly qualified to address his God in prayer. Being unresigned with regard to the time fixed in infinite wisdom for the bestowment of promised blessings, he will fervently solicit them; and because they do not descend at the conclusion of his petitions, his supposed faith is gradually extinguished, impatience succeeds, and the whispering language of his soul is in the style of ancient pride; "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways."

The manner in which Divine favors are conferred upon us, requires the exercises of resignation. The prayerful orphan is entitled by the word of promise to the parental protection of his God. In answering prayers, that embrace the desirable blessing, he may

frequently find the trials and afflictions of life, encreased at every step, and the fervors for which he pleads, disguised beneath the dark apparel of calamity. Reconciliation renders delightful the holy importunity of his soul, and mingles with devotion the sustaining influences of patience and hope.

That part of prayer, which relates to the triumphs of grace in the hearts of others, and the approach of millennial glory, must be made with entire submission to the Divine sovereignty, in order to constitute a transforming and edifying service. The changes that are to be brought about, the instruments that are to be employed are known only of God. The time in which the wrath of man shall rage, and christianity, with all its votaries, be subject to the sarcastic smile of infidelity, must be submitted to the great Judge of the earth. We must realize that as the Heavens are high above the earth, so are his ways above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts. Thus, through the influence of the spirit, piety delights to name the hope of Zion, and dwell in her prayers on the triumphs of her exalted King.

In public and private our prayers are made with a view of obtaining the soul transforming influences of grace and evangelical doctrines. Much consolation arises from the hopes, that we may be guided by the spirit of truth to a right understanding of the everlasting gospel. Irreconciliation wishes to enjoy the fruits of

Divine doctrines, but is opposed to the mode of their operation, and complains of the severity of their requisition. If it solicits the effect of salutary doctrines, it by no means consents to relinquish the favourite entertainments of the world. It would incorporate with natural and philosophic principles those Divine precepts and doctrines, which would give a brilliance to outward character and confirm the claims to renown. Nothing can be more provoking in the sight of God, than for man to plead for the forms of godliness, while he denies and attempts to elude the power.—The subjects of reconciliation desire the vital influences of grace, and the full operations of Divine counsel, the restraints of which are followed with joy and an increasing purity of life and character.

Vital irreconciliation is too frequently the cause of that discouragement and irksomeness that brood in the retreats of the closet. It is a current opinion among men, that there is a Divinity in the heavens, whose ear is for ever attentive to the cries of his rational offspring. There are probably but few, who have arrived to years of discernment, who have not been forced by fear and sinking infirmity, to lift a suppliant eye to the present help in time of need. When they are assailed by danger and encompassed with terrific threatenings, they feel a kind of conscious sincerity in their reiterated petitions for mercy, receiving none, however, because they ask amiss, they be-

come wearied of the experiment and dare to suspect the efficacy of prayer, till driven to the last extremity, they invite the righteous around them, tremulously entreating them; "Call upon your God, if so be he may hear and have mercy, that we perish not." No sooner does the storm subside, the thunders retire from the sky, and the billows of tribulation recede, than the pride of the heart arises from its lurking seclusion, rallying from depression every rebellious feeling, leading them without hesitation, to ascribe every devotional exercise to human weakness and the relentless empire of superstition. An unreconciled and unsubdued will excludes from the heart the smiles of Divine favour and the same will inclines them to bid a final adieu to the sacred shrine of devotion.

From the imperious dictates of early instruction and habit, it is common for men to regard a round of devotional duties. It would resemble an excruciating abstinence from the comforts of life, to make omission of the intercessory forms to which they had been long addicted; and for the want of true resignation these forms are an irksome task; and the richest felicity they can boast, arises from a vain expectation, that they have appeased the wrath of indignant Heaven, and constituted an atonement for sins already committed. The resigned soul is not constrained by fear alone, nor by the power of habit to its devotional exercises. It is drawn by the sweet

influences of the spirit, and by the unalterable attractions of the Divine glory; and in scenes of the deepest distress, or the most unclouded prosperity, it visits with joy the hallowed altar of devotion, and pours its incense from the celestial phials of reconciliation.

There are certain seasons, in which resignation conveys its luminous and purifying influence upon devotion. Peculiarly adapted to this desirable effect are the retirements of the evening. The importunity of secular care is then suspended. The allurements of visible objects cease to divide attention, the vanities of fashion, the noise and bustle of popular concernments are not heard to bewilder our thoughts, or to stifle the devotional aspirations of the soul. We reflect upon the scenes of life, and discern with reverence that controling hand, that delineates our condition. However grievous the allotments of Providence, we dare not entertain a wish, that they had been less embittered by chastisement, or less encumbered with the weight of trial. Rejoicing that the Lord reigneth, we lift our waiting eyes to Heaven, our bosoms glow with pure and fervent affection, and our spirits are richly entertained from the fountain of life and joy. In the evening, the heart and the mind are susceptible of impressions and thoughts, which are not experienced at other seasons. The charms of music, the voice of friendship, and the tidings from distant kindred are the most enrapturing, when they

are heard at the close of the day. We are then free to associate a thousand endearing circumstances, which are all surveyed with enchantment. Would the youth be sensible of the immortality of love, and retain in absence its purest fervors, he would select the silent hour of retirement. Did the rays of the moon sport in the tear of affection, and but half reveal the charms of his endeared object, it would be enough. Fancy would supply the portrait, and bind it on the heart for ever. The reciprocal vows of fidelity are not made to vanish away, but to abide, with life in the sacred records of memory. If we ask the guilty, at what season they are most alive to the corroding impressions of remorse, and to the terrors of Divine vengeance, they will reply, it is in the night. And to hurry themselves from appaling thoughts, they must summon the powers of invention to devise new schemes of enormity or to apologise to the conscience for those, which they have already achieved. Hence it is by no means mysterious, that resigned and devotional souls are favored with the sublimest visions of faith, and the most celestial and glorious impressions, during the watches of the night. Those moments, in which we awake from sleep and meditate upon the holy Divinity with devout and reconciled feelings, exceed, in worth and edifying influence, years that are passed in the noise and diverting allurements of the world.

There are times of danger, which are trying to the soul. Infidelity is made to tremble in presence of impending ruin. The inflated courage of the votaries of modern philosophy fails. Licentiousness stands aghast, agonizing under the cruel darts of remorse, and compelled with awe, solicits the interposition of Divine mercy. In these alarming scenes resignation has a happy and distinguishing effect upon the devotion of the pious. It procures a holy fortitude and gives a calmness and a sincerity to the supplications, that are offered to God in the name of his Anointed. To illustrate this sentiment, the insertion of an extract from the journal of a friend may not be entirely useless. "The sixth day of our passage we lingered under a perfect calm.—At evening twilight the awful silence of nature was broken, by the hollow murmuring of a distant tempest, which seemed to be travelling in awful majesty upon us. From several infallible signs discovered in the heavens, it was announced expedient to make speedy preparation for that catastrophe, which was no sooner betokened than it began to be felt. The skies were wrapped in darkness, the tempest raged with irresistible fury, and death and eternity were the only perspectives before us. At this time, I left my companions on deck promiscuously calling for help and repaired to the apartment, unto which the amiable and timid female, whom I had before mentioned, had repaired. I found her kneel-

ing, and by the aid of the gleams of her lamp discovered her celestial visage. Being interrupted in her devotions, she involuntarily exclaimed: "Watchman what of the night?" I was too deeply affected to make any reply. She sedately turned her eyes to heaven again. Her lips moved, but the howling of the wind through the cordage of the ship, the noise of the broken and convulsed waters, prevented my hearing any thing more than the following detached expressions of reconciled devotion. "Deep crieth unto deep—thine own time and thine own way are the best—my father and my mother—wipe away from their eyes the tears of sorrow—shall I see their face no more? could I inform them that thou art a present help in time of trouble—not mine but thy will be done—come quickly Lord Jesus." At the fourth watch of the night the storm abated, and the dangers with which we had been threatened, had retreated. The interesting and devout conversation of this lovely saint, together with her unshaken fortitude, rendered my passage one of the most interesting scenes of my life. Her age was but seventeen years, and she had lately been admitted into a *regular* Baptist Church in the vicinity of our metropolis."

But few in the christian world are constantly favored with the cheering illuminations of faith and hope. Darkness, melancholy and doubt are more or less crouded into the scenes of probationary experience. These evils are

not easily removed by the influence of society. Social diversions only serve to make us forget for a moment that wretchedness to which our consciousness is again awakened, with encreased discouragement. Profound meditation will frequently weary and bewilder the mind, and summon into view a thousand disheartening fears and alarming apprehensions. In solitary devotion, the soul is restored from its melancholy depression, and is made by Divine grace to soar above the darkened aspect of surrounding objects. The devout sensations of the heart and the feelings of celestial influence procure a deliverance from the irksome intenseness of disconsolate thought, and the perplexing concernments of the world. In the retired sanctuary of private prayer, our views of the character of God are restored with additional brightness, and in the blood of the Lamb is discovered the power of atonement for sin. The righteousness of Christ is applied by the spirit; and the triumphs of grace over the depravity of the heart are conspicuously manifested. The painful repining at our apostate condition is removed, by the hopes of a glorious reinstatement into the Divine favor, according to a plan wisely and mercifully devised, before the foundations of the earth were laid. These effects of solitary devotion are not to be realized by every one who is driven to the closet by the power of fear, by grievous bereavement, or by a constitutional melancholy, but by those who confidential-

ly submit to the Divine government, who reverence their Creator, when he walks in a pavilion of darkness, or when he appears in all the splendor of his reconciled countenance. It is then that the depressed spirit is raised from the caverns in which it has groaned. When the soul can say, continue me in darkness; protract the night of my calamity so long as thy glory and thy will require; then it is usually found, that the light is not far distant, that it will soon burst upon us, like the full effulgence of the morning upon the benighted and wandering sons of a shepherd.

The unexpected reception of favour and mercy constrains us to repair to the shrine of devotion, and offer the incense of praise to our Heavenly Father. When we are called to retreat from the brink of the grave, when we are delivered from the agony of bodily pain; or when we are favored with the triumph over the attacks of malevolence, what fervors of gratitude are kindled in our hearts? We feel the need of a thousand tongues in order to express the full amount of encreased obligation. Entire reconciliation is necessary to perpetuate and heighten the charm of our devotional thanksgivings. While a relic of dissatisfaction concerning the Divine government is to be found in the soul, our praises will be languid and our intercessions will be mingled with scrupulosity and slavish fear. Resignation brings us so near to heaven and our God, that we discern with reverence the rectitude

of his ways. We are troubled with no contending desire, that the trials and evils, thro' which we have passed, had been less alarming or less attended with poignancy and fatigue. We have no wish that the intervals of our prosperity had been protracted to greater lengths, or brightened with a greater radiance, than what the Almighty was pleased to bestow upon them. The spirits are now recreated by the return of celestial benignity. Obedience, which is an infallible path to glory and consolation, more deeply than ever engages the soul. Every power is summoned into exercise and concurs with a train of gracious affections, to make our life a scene of wise employment, a song of praise and an example of pure devotion.

To resign ourselves by an act of devotion to the arms of our Redeemer, is an infallible method of surmounting the allurements of vice, and the temptations that arise in disguised forms around us. If we hazard our character and felicity upon our own ability to resist and vanquish at pleasure the dangers and difficulties that throng our course; if we vainly wish to magnify our bravery and firmness by actual experiment; or if we dare to enter the field of conflict alone, we shall fall a prey to the great devourer of the souls of men. How often have we found the power of reason, combined with the most strenuous exertions we could possibly command, incompetent to procure us an escape from the fas-

cinating but deathly empire of iniquity? During one moment of resigned devotion the energies of the soul are quickened and encreased, temptations are divested of their charm, and with facility they are driven into dispersion. Yet, how frequently do men complain of the penurious consolations of prayer? From the depths of their affliction they have earnestly pleaded for relief; under the fears of death they have lifted both night and day their voices unto heaven; and in the scenes of prosperity every hour has been perfumed with the incense of praise; yet their grievances were not redressed; their joys remained the sport of change, or enbalmed to immortality by all the odours of devotional gratitude. This complaint equally announces the complexion of the heart and the want of reconciliation to the will of heaven. Young man! hast thou a care for thy soul? before thou consentest to enter the gilded hall of dissipation, bow in submission and devote thyself to Christ; and thy character shall not retire in shame to the grave. Invidious slanderer! before thou poison thy arrows in malice, ask leave of thyself to spend one moment under the influences of true reconciliation, and thy words and thy counsel will become harmless. Blasphemous infidel! deposit thy weapons; submit to the sceptre of Jehovah, and devoutly solicit the light of his countenance, and thou shalt see the traveller in dyed garments, reverence the greatness of his strength, and rejoice that he has trodden the wine press alone.

CHAPTER IX.

THE INFLUENCE OF RESIGNATION ON THE SENTIMENTS OF MORTALITY.

LINGERING sickness and a dying hour are not the only seasons, in which we are awake to the sentiments of mortality. They force their way to the young and tremulous heart; they visit the bosoms of the gay, and are not entirely excluded from the sons of dissipation and mirth. We are admonished of our own dissolution by all the objects that command our notice, and by all the diversified scenes of life.

To enlarge the sphere of thought, and store the mind with useful knowledge, we fondly search the records of times that are past. We bring into view that small number of actors, who have immortalized their names by bathing in rivers of blood, by swaying with renown the rod of dominion, or by labours of lasting utility; but we inquire in vain for the countless multitude, whose agency, together with their names and style of condition are swallowed up in oblivion. We are forced to pause and sigh that they were once alive, like ourselves; that of the dust they were formed, and to the dust they have all returned. We travel in obedience to a restless curiosity, and inspect with pleasing wonder the works of genius, of art and of taste. In speechless awe we tread on the ruins of ancient magnificence, and are over-

taken with solemn impressions of the wide and relentless empire of death. Our feelings of joy are usually followed by feelings that alarm the love of life, by bringing to our view the narrowness of its limits. The works of nature richly entertain the heart and instruct the mind; and while they loudly proclaim the wisdom of their Creator, they also speak of their own demolition. If we compare the length of our days with continuance of the objects around us, they are scarcely more than a fleeting vision. Often has the morning flower survived the hand that planted it, and the eye that viewed with soft delight its growth and bloom.—The trees, we have reared with a kind of parental affection, are left to shed and renew their foilage and fruit, while we are slumbering in the silent grave. The removal of our connexions and friends, allows no hour of our existence to pass away unthronged with the thoughts of dissolution. The retirement of the evening, the reigning silence of the night refer the mind to the approaching events of infinite solemnity. To the natural heart those sentiments of mortality are accompanied with pain, and with a depressing weight of fear and dread. It would gladly evade their influence, and wrap itself in some pleasing fiction, in which to dream away a transient life. Attempts to this pitiful evasion are fruitless.—The admonitions of death are so unremitting without, and so important within our bodies, that they will command our alarmed attention.

Resignation, however, proffers her consolation, and gives a salutary influence to those thoughts and feelings, from which the world desire to be exempted.

When the sentiments of mortality are awakened in the unresigned heart, they have a natural tendency to depress the spirits, darken every prospect, and render irksome the labours of life. Convinced of the fading nature of earthly objects, and the uncertainty of enjoying in a future day the fruits of our present exertions, our courage fails, and the powers of our body and mind are wrapped in languor and sloth, and it is left to the murmurings of a restless spirit alone, to announce that we are yet alive. In all our laborious undertakings we are obliged to forget that we are mortal, or embrace an enchanting delusion in order to accomplish them with alacrity and speed. Ambition refuses to lead us in its gorgeous career, the moment it discerns the emptiness of its richest glory. It recoils from the belief that dissolution will consign to forgetfulness the splendid actions and the distinguishing laurels of secular greatness. The hardy hand of avarice is palsied in the hour of reflection.—When the brevity of life and certainty of death are seriously discerned, we muse with depressing melancholy over our riches, and tremble beneath the apprehension, that we must leave them to the possession of others, and mingle without distinction with the dust of the meanest mortals. Under the impression of death

we are liable to perform in a slighty manner those things which are enjoined upon us by imperious necessity. A great portion of our agency terminates with the exigencies of the present moment. Since we can promise ourselves neither health, nor life in any future period, we forbear to labour, reserving our strength to reproach the Divine government, and to contrive amendments which we vainly suppose might well be made in the laws of Heaven.

Resignation has a surprising influence on the sentiments of dissolution. It takes away their poignancy, and removes their depressing effects. It reverses their influence, and makes them subserve our temporal and eternal interest. Although the fading features of material objects, and the ultimate evanescence of the whole terrestrial scenery impress our minds with our own approaching doom, yet these impressions are mingled with the sublimest feelings of immortality. Our energies are called at once from their listless retreats and unremittingly engaged in the momentous concernments of being. We are conscious that many of our present comforts were procured through the instrumentality of our ancestors. We are enabled to surmount the discouragements that arise from the precarious tenure of our own lives. To supply the wants of the day is not sufficient, but in obedience to Divine requirement we appropriate our strength to labours of utility and permanence. If some

future traveller should find a refuge from the storm, or from the heat of day, beneath the works of our hands, enquire for our name, and bless his God, we are amply rewarded for our exertions. If we be satisfied with the unoriginated counsels of Jehovah, and with the righteous allotments of his providence, we shall enter the field of duty with a becoming zeal, and rejoice to be found among the subsidiary instruments in accomplishing his infinitely wise and benevolent designs. The space appointed for our abode on earth is narrow. All its portions may be easily dialled on the point of a diamond. However unimportant they may seem, yet they are all connected with the realities of eternity. These sentiments of frailty under the influence of a holy reconciliation alarm alike our fears and hopes, drive the brooding languors of indolence from our souls, and excite a practical regard to the injunctions of former wisdom, which requires us to do with our might whatsoever our hands find to do, assuring us there is neither knowledge, nor device in the grave whither we are hastening. To realize our transient being, without the exercises of submission, either stifles the love of exertion, or hurries us on to aggravated rebellion. For a murmuring spirit is sometimes a mountain upon us, and again it drives us forward, like a legion that possesses the heart, tempting it to every sinful invention.

Fruitful of advantage are submissive reflections upon the transient and eventful nature

of the present state. We are indissolubly bound to the agile wings of time, and are conveyed with equal celerity, whether we slumber and linger, or be deeply engaged in the great concerns of our future felicity. During our most vacant hours a hidden hand is always employed in fixing the complexion and style of our future condition. Thoughts like these awake our immortal part. It fears to arrive at the world of spirits, without a wise improvement of time and talents. We are excited to double our diligence to redeem the time and strive to be found invested with the righteousness of Christ. When the apostle would enforce on the mind the great solemnities that await us beyond the grave, he addresses our sentiments of morality; he presents to our view the shortness of time, the certain dissolution of the tender connexions and attachments that are formed on earth, and enjoyed with so much delight. When we feel with him, that the fashion of the world passeth away, aspirations after heaven are quickened, and strengthened within us, and we look for a city, whose builder and maker is God.

Resignation renders beneficial the sentiments of mortality, by making them lead to just conceptions of the dignity and worth of the soul. If we be so reconciled to our heavenly father, that we can meditate without dread upon that momentous period when creation shall groan and die; can we dare, when wrapped in the silence of night, bring into view the

solemnities of eternity! what a multitude of sublime and transporting thoughts rush in upon the mind. We survey our exalted rank in the chain of being, and feel, that, after the worm has rioted upon our bodies, we shall live and out live the luminaries of the sky.—We are thus excited to spend the infancy of existence to the honor and glory of God, that its matured state may be employed in songs of deathless praise. To illustrate the worth and transcendent dignity of the soul, and to evince the infinite importance of a pious life, an inspired saint calls up to view the feelings of mortality, by bringing into view the tremendous doom, which awaits the glorious works of creation. "The day of the Lord," said he, "will come as a thief in the night; "in the which the heavens shall pass away "with a great noise, and the elements shall "melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and "the works that are therein, shall be burned "up." Here we are tremblingly awake to the most solemn thoughts of dissolution. Our weakness and frailty are sensibly felt, and we can scarcely suppress our fears of being lost, with kindred atoms, in the immensity of death's last labors. The sentiments of mortality are excited, and to them he addresses the following language. "Seeing then, that "all these things shall be dissolved, what "manner of persons ought ye to be, in all ho-"ly conversation and godliness, looking for "and hasting unto the coming of the day of

"God, wherein the heavens, being on fire, "shall be dissolved, and the elements shall "melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless, we, "according to his promise, look for a new "heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth "righteousness."

On the scale of comparison we appreciate the objects around us and denominate them valuable or worthless, according to their appearance in a contrasted view. While wretchedness repiningly broods over her own maladies, she supposes that the cup of wo, and the dregs thereof are appointed to her alone. But when she looks around, and finds that other calamities more than equal her own, her burden imperceptibly diminishes and a sustaining fortitude enables her to triumph over the melancholy depressions of the heart. The possessors of a competency often experience a restless dissatisfaction when they look with a coveting eye upon the splendid inheritance of the rich and the great. By surveying, however, the lower paths of fortune, they return to their own possessions, with renovated delight, and more perfect contentment. While the sumptuous lords of the earth confine their walks within the limits of their own magnificence and grandeur, they imperceptibly lose the charms of bounty, and they partake the luxury of their tables with less delight than is felt by the wearied sojourner, who receives his scanty allowance beneath the oak that shades his way.

Our ideas of good, of evil, of happiness and of misery are necessarily formed upon the principles of comparison. Our life is long, compared with the life of many inferior animals; but it is short compared with the primitive age of man, and shorter still, when compared with the continuance of the material world, and it shrinks to a point, when compared with unbounded eternity. Intuitive views are beyond the reach of human attainment. We are obliged to reason and to compare things that are temporal, with those that are eternal, in order to estimate their respective worth and importance. When we consider the perishable nature of earthly objects; when we discover the works of art and genius nodding and mouldering away, or when we gaze in silence at the disfigured vestiges of former magnificence, the impressions of dissolution are sensibly experienced. We realize that we have no continuing city below, and are compelled to travel in thought, searching for a country which is not subject to the empire of decay. If resignation befriend our endeavors, and pour its tranquilizing influence on the mind, we are enabled to transfer our thoughts from temporal vanities, to the unfading scenes of the celestial world. The former are, at best, but the gilded toys, that amuse the infancy of being; the latter are substantial realities, entirely competent to answer the desires of the matured and immortal soul. The instability of human affairs, the

painful vicissitudes through which we are called to pass, cause us to feel our frailty and imperfections. From impressions of this kind we are urged to seek after a world that is above the reach of derangement and change. By submitting to the divine will, his immutable counsels, the glory and permanence of his government invite our confidence, command our affections, and sustain our spirits. No art can imitate, nor hypocrisy counterfeit the sensations that crowd upon the heart, while we witness with pious submission the languishment and departure of endeared connexions. The tender attachments that bind us to the world, that seem essential in supporting the springs of life, are dissolved. The tremulous struggles of the transient infant, the expiring groans of those who have arrived to riper years, draw before us in forceful language the warrant of our dissolution. If we look backward there is death, or forward behold it is there. As the fowl, that hovers in vain for rest over the bubbles of the swelling flood, must flee to the distant mountain; so the soul is driven from the empty shadows and forms of sublunary bliss to light and rest on the eternal tree of life. Love and affliction are hard to be extinguished; they mysteriously elude the power and triumphs of death. The sentiment of dissolution kindles them to purer flames, and infuses them with something celestial and divine. We receive the hand of a departing friend, and hear him bid us, in

faltering accents, "farewell;" adding, "We "shall soon meet again, where the tear of "sympathetic sorrow shall start and fall no "more from our eyes, but where love shall be "pure from the fountain; eternal as the hea- "vens; making glad for ever the city of God."

Thus by comparing the transiency of temporal things with the permanent scenes of futurity, impressions of frailty are awakened, and these are the pangs that precede the birth of immortal hopes, and the consolatory aspirations after unfading glory. Our thoughts on death, when controlled by resignation, have a peculiar influence in softening, and rendering seraphic the charities of domestic and social life. Reason and argument are not always successfully employed against the strength of passion and the ebullitions of a roiled temper. A single sentiment of immortality will do more in vanquishing our peevish and querulous feelings, than a host of tardy arguments. If we reflect on the shortness of our days, and the approaching solemnities of a dying hour, we lose at once a propensity to plant our path with thorns, on which ourselves and others must tread with anguish. We have no inclination to darken our narrow sky with the sombre fumes of discord, or the noxious vapours, that arise from a cynical morosity; and much less to dress with night shade the table of Divine bounty, and mingle the cup of entertainment with the poison of malice and remorse; knowing that sufficient

for the day are the unavoidable evils thereof. We kindly endeavor to meliorate our condition by reciprocal benevolence; by bearing each others burdens, and by soothing to rest our rising pangs and anxious cares.

The impressions of frailty and dissolution, when felt in true submission to the Divine will, prevent much criminality and guilt, into which we are liable to be hurried, when left to the dictates of lust and passion. Let the blood thirsty warrior but say to himself, "I "am but a worm of the dust, endangered by "the moth, and in constant hazard of being "crushed by the finger of vengeance; I must "shortly be brought to the receptacle of the "dead;" and he will recoil from carnage and human slaughter. He will dread the thought of being overtaken by death, while performing some horrid deed, and leaving behind him a blood written name, that shall be immortalized by the execrations of indignant posterity. Under all temptations to lewdness, to dissipation and injustice, the returning feeling of our own mortality and the succeeding judgment, never fail, if we resign our cause to God, of restraining the heart and interdicting the commission of crimes, to which we are forcefully tempted. Reconciliation renders beneficial the sentiments of our frailty, by making them conduce to a spirit of candor and commiseration. When it be realized that we are all subject to infirmities, that we are men of like passions, allured by

the same vanities, and misguided by the same prejudices, we are constrained to look upon our fellow mortals with a charitable eye. Our fellow feelings are never so tenderly alive, as when they are mingled with a sense of our own weakness. The vain superiority, and disdainful hauteur, which characterize a considerable portion of mankind, are brought down in those moments, when they dare to feel that they are mortal. The slanderous tongue relinquishes its cruel toils during the seasons of disease. The busy hand of mischief is compelled to rest, when the thoughts of dissolution and eternity are allowed a residence in the mind. Should we select a man, who would be constantly awake to the cries of misery; who would heartily sympathize with the sons of sorrow; who would faithfully befriend the character of the virtuous, our choice would not fall upon one, who had never felt the impressions of frailty; it would fall upon the man, who had tasted the cup of sorrow; who had made the thoughts of dissolution the familiar visiter of his solitary and devotional hours.

The emancipated slave must visit in memory the horrors of the prison, and the toils of former servitude, in order to preserve from languor the joys of freedom. The refuge of the mariner loses its enrapturing enchantment the moment he forgets the dangers and distress, from which he has escaped. The orphan must be referred to her early bereave-

ments, and to the ravages of death, that she may supply in her heart the incense of gratitude before her God, and her mortal protectors. Thus allied to mortality are the vivid and sustaining hopes of eternal life. When the former are experienced under the influence of resignation, they rarely fail of awakening the latter into a pure and celestial fervor. Our love of Jesus derives its melting tenderness from impressions, that are made from a view of the great empire of death. Gratitude glows in our bosoms, as we survey the sufferings and death of our Lord. If we visit the garden, in which he drank the cup of agony, and the mount on which he endured the pangs of dissolution; our love is kindled at every step; the worth, the glory and excellence are heightened in our estimation, in proportion to the sensibilities of his amazing sufferings, and distressful death. O! ye cold, dead, speculative believers, who forbear to travel on the mountains where the Redeemer endured the cross, and was assailed by all the powers of death and hell; have ye ever felt a supreme attachment and affection for your God? Do the sentiments of mortality, and the sentence of condemnation, which hath passed upon all, lead you to appreciate the Lamb that was slain, as the chiefest among ten thousands and altogether lovely?

The scenes of mirth and gaiety are by no means favorable to useful impressions and elevated thoughts. Our solitary moments are

the best adapted to serious and useful exercises. When we assume an attitude of meditation on the shore of the seas during the silence of the evening, a train of sublime thoughts will rush upon the mind. It is struck with the awe of immensity; and, while listening to the voice of the waves, it considers that no one of them expires on the strand, till it hath laved the bones of the dead, that slumber in the caverns of the deep. When we pensively walk over the dust of departed mortals, our minds are irresistibly referred to the morning of the resurrection, when the trump of God shall call the dead from the earth, and the sea; and innumerable multitudes of human forms shall swarm into being. If resignation have brought us into the reconciled countenance of the Divinity, these thoughts are no less consolatory than awfully sublime. They are allied with hopes, that sustain the soul, excite our vigilance, and animate our exertions in the service of the Creator. Far from causing us to disdain a transient life, they incline us to treat it as an endeared infant; to procure for it an asylum from guilt and ruin, in the smiles of Jesus; that, when it arrives to an immortal manhood, it may be found invested with the immaculate robes of his righteousness. Our longings after immortality are sensibly experienced under the solemn views of dissolving nature, and its reawakening at the call of the angel, when this corruptible shall put on incorruptibility, and this

mortal immortality, and death, to the sons and daughters of resignation shall be swallowed up in victory.

To perpetuate the influence of example on our conduct, and to quicken our energeis in virtuous pursuits, we often recur to the renowned benefactors of man, and seriously regard the anniversary solemnities of their death. We commemorate the dying love of our Redeemer, to secure from slumber a grateful sense of his triumphant mercy and matchless grace. It is highly probable, that the memory of the saints in glory will be much employed in retrospection upon the empire of mortality, under which they had once groaned, and upon the sufferings and death of Christ, that they may praise his name with increasing raptures of joy.

To these ideas murmuring responses descend from the galleries of gaiety and mirthful pleasure; they are heard to exclaim, 'the 'thoughts of dissolution spoil our delights, 'diffuse an awful melancholy on the mind. 'They make our hearts tremble, whenever 'they are forced upon us, and like the haunting ghost of murdered time, they make us 'dread to be left alone!' Alas! they are wandering from their Creator, and have never been led by the influences of the Spirit into the transporting light of Divine complacency. Resignation conducts her sanctified votaries, with patient and cheerful steps through this vale of tears; she removes the depressing

weight of sorrow from their hearts, procures them comforts from the most rugged paths of adversity, and edifies their souls and purifies their hearts, by all the repeated scenes of dissolution. She makes them partakers of a promise, that is paramount to an inheritance in heaven; "All things shall work together "for your good; the world, life and death, "and things present, and things to come; all "are yours, and ye are Christ's and Christ "is God's.

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